The Rose Cross and the Age of Reason

Eighteenth-Century Rosicrucianism in Central Europe and its Relationship to the Enlightenment

Christopher McIntosh

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PREFACE

This book is one of a number of works in which I have explored what can loosely be called the "Gnostic" undercurrents of western civilization. The Rosicrucian movement is one of those undercurrents. The present study deals with the revival of Rosicrucianism during the era of the Enlightenment, focusing mainly on the German-speaking realm. It re-examines the "Counter-Enlightenment" label that historians have often attached to this movement, and discusses the role played by the Rosicrucian revival in culture, politics, religion and science.

The work was originally written as a doctoral thesis in history at the University of Oxford, where it was presented in 1989 under the title *The Rosicrucian Revival and the German Counter-Enlightenment*. Apart from some relatively minor changes, the text remains substantially the same.

It is a pleasure to express my gratitude to those who have helped me during the preparation of this work. I include also the names of those who have since died. Institutional affiliations are given as they were at the time. Throughout the research and writing, my then wife Katherine gave me steadfast moral support, empathy and many valuable comments and encouraged me through the difficult patches. Dr. R.J.W. Evans, of Brasenose College, Oxford, was as wise and insightful a supervisor as I could have wished for. Professor Ludwig Hammermayer of the University of Munich was a generous mentor, reading and commenting on the manuscript, supplying me with much essential secondary material and cheering me with his enthusiasm for the project. Dr. Eckhart Hellmuth of the German Historical Institute, London, was also generous with his time and expert advice.

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Poland; Dr. Jiri Kroupa of Brno, Slovakia; Professor Abbott Gleason of Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island; Jean-Pascal Ruggiu of Paris; Dr. Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke; and Dr. Christina Rathgeber.

Equally importantly, I must thank the librarians and archivists without whom this work could never have been written. Among these a special debt of gratitude is due to Mr. B. Croiset van Uchelen, Librarian of the Grand Lodge of the Netherlands at the Hague, who helped me to mine his library's superb collection and gave me the benefit of his encyclopedic knowledge of Masonic history. In the same category I must thank the following: Herbert Schneider, Librarian of the Deutsches Freimaurer-Museum, Bayreuth; Dr. Regina Mahlke of the Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin; the staff of the Haus-Hof- und Staatsarchiv and the Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, and of the Tiroler Landesarchiv, Innsbruck; John Hamill and his staff at the Library of the United Grand Lodge of England and Wales, London; the staff of the British Library, the Bodleian Library, the Oxford History Faculty Library and the Taylor Institute Library, Oxford.

I am grateful to the British Academy for awarding me a Major State Studentship, and last but not least I must express my gratitude to the Governing Body of my college, Christ Church, and to the Oxford University Committee for Graduate Studies, both of whom provided grants for travel and research.

Writing on a German subject in English involves making certain decisions as to language and stylistic convention. I have translated nearly all German quotations into English. Occasionally, for the sake of clarity, I have inserted the original of a word or phrase in the square brackets in the text, and in certain cases where the whole quotation was written in an archaic or idiosyncratic German I have reproduced the original text in the footnotes.

Proper names I have left in German unless they are very familiar (e.g. Vienna, Munich, Silesia). Titles I have anglicized (e.g. Duke Eugen of Württemberg) expect in certain cases (e.g. Landgraf).

When I use the word "Germany" I mean, roughly, the German-speaking lands within the Holy Roman Empire.

FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

In the interval of about two decades since the first edition of this book was published, some remarkable changes have taken place within the academic world. At that time the study of history in Western universities tended to be dominated by a school of thought which rejected everything that it regarded as archaic, anti-progressive and irrational—including all the traditions that could broadly be described as "esoteric." When scholars did write about these subjects they were expected to adopt a cynical tone of voice. Thus John M. Roberts, although himself the author of an excellent and pioneering study entitled *The Mythology of the Secret Societies*, in writing a friendly review of my book in the *English Historical Review* (June, 1996), remarked: "Like so much in the hidden world of secret organizations of its age, Rosicrucianism is likely to remain of interest to historians mainly as a registration of minds adrift from their moorings and of the intellectual disorder of the age." As long as this type of view prevailed and phenomena such as Rosicrucianism were seen as mere aberrations, much that was important in western thought was seen in a distorted light or simply ignored. In recent decades, however, a whole new academic discipline—the study of Western Esotericism—has become firmly established, and within this discipline the history of Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism and related movements is recognized as a key element. The appearance of the second edition of this book on the 18th-century Gold- und Rosenkreuz (Golden and Rosy Cross) order is therefore timely, and it is most appropriate that it should appear in the SUNY Press Series in Western Esoteric Traditions.

The more we learn about the Golden and Rosy Cross, the more remarkable it seems. As an organized body, it emerged under mysterious circumstances around the 1760s—from earlier roots—and spread with astonishing speed from its original breeding-ground in southern Germany and the Habsburg territories to central and northern Europe and then as far east as Russia. At its height it had a membership that probably ran into more than a thousand, distributed over some 39 "circles" (as its lodges were called) covering a vast area stretching from Vienna to Lübeck and from Aachen to Moscow and operating a highly elaborate ritual and grade system, which included the practice of alchemy. Its antecedents remain a mystery, but it is tempting to

speculate that perhaps there was an intermediate order forming a "missing link" with the original Rosicrucian movement of the early 17th century.

Meanwhile, although this book remains the only comprehensive study of the subject in English, other works on the Golden and Rosy Cross have appeared, notably Renko Geffarth's admirable study in German *Religion und arkane Hierarchie. Der Orden der Gold- und Rosenkreuzer als Geheime Kirche im 18. Jahrhundert* (Leiden, Brill, 2007). An intriguing aspect that Geffarth brings to light is that private study at home was an important requirement of the members, who could receive guidance from their superiors by post. Someone who found it difficult to attend a circle could even be received into the order and promoted to higher grades on the basis of his independent work. The Golden and Rosy Cross was thus possibly the first "home study" mystery school and the forerunner of orders like the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor and the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC). Although the Golden and Rosy Cross apparently came to an end in the last decade of the 18th century, its influence has continued to the present day. Its grade system was adopted by other organizations such the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, the Golden Dawn and AMORC, and it helped to keep the alchemical tradition alive and pave the way for the modern alchemical revival.

Far from being a peripheral aberration in the history of the West, the Golden and Rosy Cross is now seen to have been a phenomenon of seminal importance in many different ways, and its echoes are still heard throughout the world. For scholars it offers a promising field for further research, especially with the new accessibility of archives in Eastern and Central Europe containing material relating to the order. This new edition of the present work will, I hope, stimulate other scholars to explore this richly fascinating subject.

INTRODUCTION

The role of secret and semi-secret societies in history is a theme that has only recently come into its own as a subject for serious historical enquiry. Its previous neglect by most professional historians was in part a reaction against the lurid credulity with which the subject has so often been treated in the past. As J.M. Roberts writes in his seminal book *The Mythology of the Secret Societies*:

> With the notable exception of some masonic historians and a few Italians excavating the roots of the Risorgimento the whole subject of secret societies was neglected as an area for serious investigation until twenty or thirty years ago. Because the historian passed by, the charlatan, the axe-grinder and the paranoiac long had the field to themselves. ... Intelligent men have preferred to treat secret societies as, until recently, they treated anti-semitism: as an aberration whose roots lay in an irrationality which disqualified it for serious study.[1]

Dr. Roberts's book was itself symptomatic of a change in attitude among historians, which has become particularly noticeable in the past two decades.

In particular the role of Freemasonry and its offshoots has emerged from a long period of academic ostracism. This ostracism was due partly to political and ideological factors. Until recently the Roman Catholic Church maintained an officially hostile attitude to Masonry and often created difficulties for masons in Catholic countries. In Austria, for example, the Craft was banned until 1918. Totalitarian regimes have also tended to be hostile to Masonry, which was rigorously suppressed in Nazi Germany and throughout most of the Communist world until the recent political re-alignment of eastern Europe, although some Marxist historians recognized it as an important historical phenomenon. In the face of these hostile attitudes, the masonic fraternity itself tended in the past to keep its doors closed to investigation from outside. Hence it is not surprising that, while this state of affairs continued, relatively little rigorous historical research was done into the Craft. The few substantial works on continental Masonry that do date from this period include L. Abafi's *Geschichte der Freimaurerei in Oesterreich-Ungarn* (1890-99), Eugen Lennhoff's *Die Freimaurer* (1932) and the works of René Le Forestier, such as *La Franc-Maçonnerie occultiste au XVIIIe siècle et l'ordre des Elus-Coëns* (1928). Such works were, however, for the most part not written by academic historians but by independent scholars, many of them writing from within Masonry. Though much of their work is extremely valuable as a source of

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[1] J.M. Roberts, *The Mythology of the Secret Societies* (London, Secker and Warburg, 1972), pp. 10-11.

reference, it rarely attempts to link Masonry systematically with its wider social, political and philosophical context.

With the easing of political and religious restrictions on Freemasonry and with an increasing degree of openness on the part of the masonic fraternity, it has become easier to examine the history of Masonry in an unfettered and impartial way, and this no doubt partly accounts for the recent upsurge of interest in the subject among academic historians. Freemasonry is now seen to have exerted an important historical influence that has extended far beyond the confines of the masonic lodges. Furthermore, it has become apparent what a rich mine of material this subject offers to the intellectual historian. Whereas truly secret societies are by definition inaccessible to the historian, the history of Freemasonry furnishes a mass of documentary evidence, much of which is now freely available. German-speaking scholars have been especially to the fore in exploring this field, and work by historians such as Richard van Dülmen, Ludwig Hammermayer, Helmut Reinalter, Manfred Agethen, Edith Rosenstrauch-Königsberg and the East German scholar, Gerhard Steiner, now adds up to an impressive body of research.[2]

There has been a tendency, however, to concentrate on what might be called the "progressive" or "enlightened" strain in Masonry and to ignore the more mystical and esoteric strain, which often clashed with the aims and ideals of the Enlightenment. Only a few academics have ventured to explore this second strain. They include the French scholar Antoine Faivre and, less recently, Heinrich Schneider, whose *Quest for Mysteries* (1947), is a rare and highly insightful analysis of the influence of mystical Freemasonry on 18th-century German culture and literature.[3] This esoteric strain was epitomized by the neo-Rosicrucian order known as the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, which flourished in the German-speaking world during the second half of the 18th century and which is the subject of this thesis.

The main work to date on the Gold- und Rosenkreuz is Arnold Marx's *Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, first published in full in 1930,[4] a straightforward account of the order, its antecedents, history, ritual system and tenets. Another important work on the order is Bernhard Beyer's *Das Lehrsystem der Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* (1925), a collection of Gold- und Rosenkreuz rituals and

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2 For a valuable and detailed survey of recent German scholarship on Fremasonry and related phenomena, see Manfred Agethen's article "Aufklärungsgesellschaften, Freimaurerei, geheime Gesellschaften", in *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, Vol. 14, 1987, Part 4 (Berlin, Duncker und Humblot), pp. 439-463.

3 Heinrich Schneider, *Quest for Mysteries: the Masonic Background for Literature in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1947).

4 Arnold Marx, *Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer. Ein Mysterienbund des ausgehenden 18ten Jahrhunderts in Deutschland* (Zeulenroda/Leipzig, das Freimaurer-Museum, 1930).

other documents, with an introduction and commentary.[5] More recently the order's importance has been recognized by scholars such as Hans Graβl, in *Aufbruch zur Romantik*,[6] R.C. Zimmerman in *Das Weltbild des jungen Goethe*,[7] J.M. Roberts in *The Mythology of the Secret Societies*, Klaus Epstein in *The Genesis of German Conservatism*,[8] Horst Möller in his essay on the order in the collection *Geheime Gesellschaften*,[9] Manfred Agethen, in his *Geheimbund und Utopie*[10] and Gerhard Steiner in his *Freimaurer und Rosenkreuzer*: Georg Forsters *Weg durch die Geheimbünde*.[11] As Agethen remarks, however, the Gold- und Rosenkreuz still deserves *"eine baldige umfassende Behandlung"*[12]

This thesis does not claim to be the "umfassende Behandlung" that Agethen advocates since a comprehensive examination of the order would require the scrutiny of documents scattered over numerous archives in different parts of western and eastern Europe, many of which are uncatalogued and inaccessible. However, through an examination of such manuscript sources as I have been able to consult, as well as through a study of printed sources, I hope to expand our understanding of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz in relation to its age by addressing certain specific questions and themes.

My central task is to re-examine the existing historical image of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz as a wholly obscurantist, reactionary, anti-Enlightenment force. This point of view, in its bluntest form, is stated by Emil Daniels in Vol. VI of *The Cambridge Modern History* (1909), where he refers to the Rosicrucian order as manifested in Prussia as "a troop of strange and repulsive figures ... a medley of religious enthusiasts, hypocrites and deceived deceivers. ..."[13] More recent writers on the subject have presented a more balanced view, one of the most thoughtful recent treatments of the topic being Horst Möller's already-mentioned article in *Geheime Gesellschaften*. Möller, however, by the

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5 Bernhard Beyer, *Das Lehrsystem der Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, published as *Pansophia*, Section II, Vol. 2 (Leipzig/Berlin, Pansophie-Verlag, 1925); also issued as Vol. I in the Freimaurer-Museum series (Leipzig/Berlin, Freimaurer-Museum, 1925).

6 Hans Graβl, *Aufbruch zur Romantik: ein Beitrag zur Geistesgeschichte Bayerns* (Munich, C.H.Beck, 1968).

7 Rolf Christian Zimmermann, *Das Weltbild des jungen Goethe* (Munich, Fink, 1979).

8 Klaus Epstein, *The Genesis of German of German Conservatism* (Princeton University Press, 1966).

9 Horst Möller, "Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer. Struktur, Zielsetzung und Wirkung einer antiaufklärerischen Gesellschaft", in *Geheime Gesellschaften*, Wolfenbütteler Studien zur Aufklärung, Band V/1, edited by Peter Christian Ludz (Heidelberg, Lambert Schneider, 1979).

10 Manfred Agethen, *Geheimbund und Utopie* (Munich, R.Oldenbourg, 1984).

11 Gerhard Steiner, *Freimaurer und Rosenkreuzer: Georg Forsters Weg durch die Geheimbünde* (Akademie-Verlag, Berlin, 1985; Weinheim, Acta Humaniora/VCH, 1985).

12 Agethen, *Geheimbund und Utopie*, p. 277.

13 Emil Daniels, "Frederick the Great and his Successor", Ch. 20 of *The Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. VI (Cambridge University Press, 1909), pp. 725-7.

very title of his article, "Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer. Struktur, Zielsetzung und Wirkung einer anti-aufklärerischen Gesellschaft", begs the question that I wish to address. Again, Klaus Epstein, in his work *The Genesis of German Conservatism*, presents the Gold- und Rosenkreuz as an avowedly conservative group: "Conservatives met, finally, the organized attempt to spread the *Aufklärung* through such secret societies as the Freemasons and the *Illuminati* by a double program of exposing the network of radical subversion ... and by founding a powerful countersect, The Rosicrucians."[14]

How accurate is this view? To what extent, if any, was the Gold- und Rosenkreuz a conservative and anti-Enlightenment body? Manfred Agethen cautions against too hasty an acceptance of this image. In his survey of recent scholarship on secret societies, he writes of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz:

> The members occupied themselves with religiously imbued magical, spiritualistic and alchemical experiments (transmutation into gold), and searched for hidden remedies, elixirs of life and the 'Philosophers' Stone'. This alone, despite the danger of credulity and charlatanism, would by no means justify applying the label of an anti-*Aufklärung* secret society. For one thing, it was by no means only unenlightened minds who took part in the Rosicrucian experiments, as is shown by the example of Forster [ie Georg Forster, an important *Aufklärung* figure] and his friend Sömmering. For another thing, this (pre-)scientific striving for knowledge of nature and at the same time for knowledge of God, which stemmed from the *Aufklärung* itself, can be understood as a kind of experimental physics, which only later revealed itself to be a false path and was not a priori founded on irrationality or deception.[15]

Agethen concedes that the Gold- und Rosenkreuz opposed the strictly reason-oriented and radical wing of the *Aufklärung*, represented by the Illuminati, and that the policies of the Rosicrucian clique in Prussia under Frederick William II brought about a reversal of much that the *Aufklärung* had achieved under Frederick the Great. He goes on, however, to mention the offshoot of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz known as the Asiatic Brethren, who are significant for having welcomed Jews as members, a policy which was ahead of its time and on the face of it was a shining example of *Aufklärung* inter-faith toleration.

Clearly, therefore, it is no simple matter to decide to what extent the Rosicrucian revival was an anti-*Aufklärung* phenomenon and in what ways it had a discernible effect as such. Furthermore the problem cannot be addressed without some notion of what is meant by the terms Enlightenment, *Aufklärung* and their opposites, and this question too is a highly complex one. My strategy, therefore, will be to begin by discussing some of the main issues that are seen as dividing the Enlightenment from the Counter-Enlightenment and the *Auf-*

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[14] Epstein, *Genesis*, p. 83.

[15] Agethen, "Aufklärungsgesellschaften etc." (see note 2), pp. 457-8.

klärung from the anti-*Aufklärung*. It will then be possible to examine the Rosicrucian revival and to see how it relates to these issues, in terms of both its *Weltanschauung* and its practical impact on the age. The Prussia of Friedrich Wilhelm II will be examined in some detail in this connection, since the Gold- und Rosenkreuz attained particular notoriety there, but the order's activities in other parts of the German-speaking world, will also be studied, and I shall deal briefly with the order's influence in Poland and Russia. My enquiry will also embrace the Asiatic Brethren and will attempt an assessment of the wider influence of the Rosicrucian revival on German culture.

This study does not set out to make a definitive statement about the precise relationship between the Rosicrucian revival and the Counter-Enlightenment in all its aspects — philosophical, religious, political and social — partly because of the problems already mentioned regarding archival material and partly because an exhaustive analysis would not be possible in the space of a thesis of this length. My approach is therefore to deal with the subject primarily under the heading of intellectual history including also some exploration of the political dimension. Analysis of social factors is introduced only to a small extent, and then mainly to justify an attitude of caution.

As my title indicates, my theme is a double one: an esoteric current of thought and a wider social and cultural movement. In throwing new light on the first I hope to be able to contribute something to a fresh understanding of the second.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ENLIGHTENMENT, THE *AUFKLÄRUNG* AND THEIR OPPONENTS

Before dealing with the role of the Rosicrucian revival in the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment, it is necessary to appreciate the problems involved in defining these terms. First, what was the Enlightenment? Historians differ in their approaches to this question, and the Enlightenment itself was a protean phenomenon, which varied from country to country and underwent changes as it progressed. Furthermore, much depends on whether one chooses to view the Enlightenment as a school of thought, a social movement or merely a certain style and way of life. Too rigid and exact a definition would be inappropriate and unhelpful, since human beings frequently rally to a banner (or against it) without having a precise notion of what the banner represents. It is possible, however, by distilling what has been written and said about the Enlightenment by some of its leading proponents and by modern scholars, to arrive at a broadly-agreed consensus as to what the Enlightenment banner stood for in a general sense.[1] I shall deal first with the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment in general and then with their particular German versions. In dealing with the general picture I shall confine myself largely to the intellectual aspects of the movement, considering certain broadly-agreed attributes and bearing in mind that it is always possible to point to individual thinkers who do not fit the picture. It is necessary for me to begin by looking beyond the German context to this wider view of the Enlightenment, since the reception of the Enlightenment in Germany as well as the reaction against it can only be understood if one has some knowledge of certain basic philosophical issues, their provenance and implications. In the German context I shall consider how the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment interacted with social and political factors and national traditions.

Arguably the most fundamental of the broadly-agreed attributes of the Enlightenment was the elevation of the faculty of reason to a new position of eminence. As the French *Encyclopédie* puts it:

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[1] My approach is based on conversations with Sir Isaiah Berlin (29 May 1988) and Dr. Lawrence Brockliss (18 March, 1968) as well as Dr. Brockliss's series of lectures at Oxford on the French Enlightenment (Hilary Term, 1988), supplemented by the sources I have quoted.

> "Reason is to the philosopher what grace is to the Christian".
>
> Grace causes the Christian to act, reason the philosopher.
>
> Other men are carried away by their passions, their actions not being preceded by reflection: these are the men who walk in darkness. On the other hand, the philosopher, even in his passions, acts only after reflection; he walks in the dark, but with a torch.[2]

This was, of course, not the first time that reason had been invoked in human history, but it now had a new importance. Franklin Le Van Baumer, in his *Main Currents of Western Thought*, writes:

> Reason, particularly among the French, was partly Cartesian and partly Lockean and Newtonian. Voltaire both praised and blamed Descartes. He blamed him for his *esprit de système* and his metaphysical errors. Nevertheless, "he taught the men of his time how to reason." Voltaire was thinking of Descartes' methodical doubt, which he hoped might be extended now beyond metaphysical ideas to social mores and institutions. Thus reason meant, primarily, the critical reason that takes nothing on trust, is suspicious of authority, tradition and revelation. ... It was also Lockean in its distrust of all intellectual "systems," including those erected by the Cartesians.[3]

Later, from about the middle of the century there came a tendency to emphasize the importance of the heart and feelings as well as the head, giving rise to a cult of "sensibility". It was not, however, the case that feeling usurped the place of reason, except perhaps in the case of the German *Sturm und Drang* movement where the cult of sensibility took an unusually extreme form. For the most part, as Norman Hampson puts it, "if feeling became pilot, reason remained in command".[4]

Along with the elevation of reason went a new faith in science. Here the work of Isaac Newton (1642-1727) was seminal. By his emphasis on the observation of nature, Newton played a central role in promoting the view that the truth was to be found in God's work and that one need not look for it in his word.[5] Although Newton, and the typical thinker of the Enlightenment, believed that the two were perfectly compatible, Newton's laws, such as his law of gravity, appeared to explain away much that had previously been explained in terms of divine action. They also undermined the old cosmology, for by

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2 Excerpted in Franklin Le Van Baumer, *Main Currents of Western Thought* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1978), p. 380.

3 Baumer, p. 366.

4 Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment* (London, Penguin, 1968; latest reprint, 1987), p. 186.

5 Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (first published as *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung*, 1932; English version, Princeton University Press, 1951), pp. 41-3.

extending the law of gravity to the whole cosmos, Newton destroyed the classical division between the celestial and sublunary realms.

Thanks to the work of Newton and other scientists of his age, it appeared that the whole plan of the universe lay waiting in nature for science to reveal. Hence what Ernst Cassirer describes as "the almost unlimited power which scientific knowledge gains over all the thought of the Enlightenment".[6] The scientific spirit was extended to society, law, politics, even poetry.

Related to this new faith in reason and science is what Karl Popper calls "optimistic epistemology,"[7] that is the notion that, while truth may be hidden, it is discoverable, and once it has been discovered it is unmistakable to those who use their understanding correctly. It follows from this that there is only one truth and one reality. The universe ultimately contains no contradictions, no mysteries and no miracles. Edward Gibbon, for example, rejected miracles when he wrote in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*: "Accustomed long since to observe and to respect the invariable order of nature, our reason, or at least our imagination, is not sufficiently prepared to sustain the visible action of the Deity."[8] The search for truth is to be carried on by rational thought and by scientific observation of nature.

Along with this optimistic epistemology went an optimistic view of human nature and of the possibilities for humankind. "Man is not born evil;" declared Voltaire "he becomes evil, as he becomes sick."[9] Thus proponents of the Enlightenment tended to deny or play down the notion of original sin. It is true that Cassirer may be exaggerating when he writes that: "The concept of original sin is the common opponent against which all the trends of the philosophy of the Enlightenment join forces"[10] for the clergymen who belonged to what David Sorkin has called the "religious Enlightenment" were inclined to retain the concept of original sin.[11] Nevertheless, the main tendency of the Enlightenment was to oppose the doctrine or to draw its teeth. The Catholic Alexander Pope, in his *Essay on Man*, as Hampson points out, reduces the Fall to a point in pre-history marking the end of a Golden Age in which humanity had lived in harmony with nature.[12] No blame is attached by Pope to this event, and there is no notion of damnation for those who fail to remove the taint of original sin through divine grace. Indeed reason has, to a large extent, taken the

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[6] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[7] Karl R. Popper, "On the Sources of Knowledge and Ignorance" in *Conjectures and Refutations* (London and Henley, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 4th edition 1972), pp. 3-30.

[8] Baumer, p. 368.

[9] Voltaire, *On Evil and Free Will*, excerpted by Baumer, p. 413.

[10] Cassirer, p. 141.

[11] David Sorkin, "Remapping the Enlightenment", seminar at St. John's College, Oxford, 20th February, 1989.

[12] Hampson, p. 102.

place of grace as the means for attaining happiness. Pope is typical of a widely-held Enlightenment view that happiness is attainable in this world. It was held that by education and by a just system of law and government, humankind would become "healthy, wealthy and wise", to use the words written by Condorcet in 1794.[13] Progress was therefore a key word in the vocabulary of the Enlightenment.

This vision of humankind's happy future was a universal vision, based on the belief that all human beings share the same essential nature and the same fundamental rights. In some respects the Enlightenment was, as Baumer points out, a great leveller. "Assuming the sameness of human nature everywhere, it equalized all men, ironing out national and cultural differences, destroying special privilege and social status."[14] This, however, was more a feature of the later Enlightenment than of its earlier phase. Pope, for example, believed that human beings naturally form a hierarchy, and in this he was not alone. Most men of letters of the period drew a sharp distinction between their own educated milieu and the illiterate mob; and *noblesse*, even among the educated, continued to be a barrier to social integration, especially in Germany.[15] It would therefore be a mistake to equate Enlightenment thought with egalitarianism.

The obstacles that the Enlightenment wished to clear out of its path were ignorance, oppression, superstition, prejudice and blind faith in authority and tradition. This frequently brought Enlightenment thinkers into conflict with orthodox Christianity, especially in the form of the Catholic Church. In their attitudes to religion, the adherents of the Enlightenment varied. As Baumer writes: "Not many of them, however, became atheists. For revealed religion they substituted their own brand of natural religion, called 'deism.' Deism was a watered down theism, and it represented an attempt to construct a religion in keeping with modern science."[16] Thus, while they were not necessarily hostile to religion as such, they were apt to reject or play down any form of revelation, scriptural or otherwise, that they saw as conflicting with reason or observation. Sacred texts, religious traditions and the insights of mystics held *per se* no authority for them. Consequently they had a tendency to drift towards natural religion, and their world-view was essentially humanity-oriented rather than god-oriented. In Pope's famous dictum "the proper study of mankind is Man".[17] Along with these tendencies went a tendency towards inter-faith toleration. Since natural religion was universal, all religions were seen as at-

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[13] Baumer, p. 368.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 371.
[15] Hampson, pp. 110 and 154.
[16] Baumer, p. 369.
[17] Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*, Book IV (1733), l.3.

tempts to express the same basic truths and ethical values. This point of view was expressed by Lessing in *Nathan der Weise* and by Christian Wolff when he praised Confucius and the morals of the Chinese—and paid for his toleration by being expelled from his chair at the University of Halle.[18]

Another aspect of the Enlightenment that is worth mentioning here is its view of history. Proponents of the Enlightenment saw themselves, in a highly conscious way, as continuing a long-standing struggle against the enemies of freedom. To quote Peter Gay:

> As the Enlightenment saw it, the world was, and always had been divided between ascetic, superstitious enemies of the flesh, and men who affirmed life, the body, knowledge, and generosity; between mythmakers and realists, priests and philosophers. Heinrich Heine, wayward son of the Enlightenment, would later call these parties, most suggestively, Hebrews and Hellenes.[19]

According to Gay, the Enlightenment view of history was correspondingly dualistic, with the past divided into four main epochs. First came the era of the Old Testament and of the great civilizations of the Middle East: Egypt, Persia, Mesopotamia. Next came the era of ancient Greece and Rome. Third came the Christian era. And finally came modern times, the era of the Enlightenment. The first and third of these were murky ages of credulity, myth and superstition. The second and fourth were brightened by the light of reason, science and freedom.[20] This historical scheme will prove to be relevant when I come to examine the literature of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz.

When it came to social and political questions the Enlightenment thinkers advocated a variety of different systems of government, from enlightened despotism to democracy. Virtually all, however, would have followed Locke in rejecting the divine right of kings and the sacrosanctity of the social hierarchy that went with it.[21]

It is also possible to speak of an Enlightenment style of writing: a preference for the clear, unambiguous message, however wittily and elegantly expressed, and a distrust of the poetic, the metaphorical, the symbolic, the moody—anything that smacked of mystery and irrationality.

If these are some of the broadly agreed attributes of the Enlightenment, those of the Counter-Enlightenment are essentially the opposite and can be characterized as follows:

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[18] Hampson, p. 104.

[19] Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: an Interpretation*, Vol. I *The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York, Knopf, 1966), p. 33.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] Baumer, p. 371.

Pride of place is given not to reason but to faith and tradition. Typical of this point of view is the German anti-*Aufklärung* philosopher, Johann Georg Hamann (1730-88). In Hamann's view, as summarized by Isaiah Berlin, "everything rests on faith; faith is as basic an organ of acquaintance with reality as the senses. To read the Bible is to hear the voice of God, who speaks in a language which he has given man the grace to understand."[22] By the same token, men like Hamann were deeply suspicious of rational science.

To the optimistic epistemology of the Enlightenment, the Counter-Enlightenment opposed a pessimistic epistemology. As Karl Popper writes:

> The contrast between epistemological pessimism and optimism may be said to be fundamentally the same as that between epistemological traditionalism and rationalism. (I am using the latter term in its wider sense in which it is opposed to irrationalism, and in which it covers not only Cartesian intellectualism but empiricism also.) For we can interpret traditionalism as the belief that, in the absence of an objective and discernible truth, we are faced with the choice between accepting the authority of tradition, and chaos.[23]

Just as we cannot trust our rational faculties as a means of arriving at truth, according to the Counter-Enlightenment view, so there is also no single, universal truth outside the Christian revelation. Hamann, for example, believed firmly that all truth is particular.[24] By the same token, there are no universal solutions to human problems since human nature is not the same all over the world. It was the realization of this view which led the Viennese writer Leopold Alois Hoffmann to turn away from the *Aufklärung* and become one of its most vociferous enemies. As Hoffmann himself wrote: "It became particularly apparent to me that it was not possible for an equal measure of Enlightenment to exist everywhere, in every country and locality...."[25]

The Counter-Enlightenment was deeply pessimistic about humankind, emphasizing the traditional Christian view of original sin and the impossibility of human beings improving themselves without divine aid, the support of tradition and the fear of authority. Instead of having a progressive view of human society, the thinkers of the Counter-Enlightenment often saw their own age as representing a decline. An example of this is found in Giambattista Vico with his cyclical theory of human history in which an "age of gods" is followed by an "age of heroes" which in turn is followed by an "age of men". The age of

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[22] Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (London, 1979; paperback, Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 7.

[23] Popper, p. 6.

[24] Berlin, p. 7.

[25] Leopold Alois Hoffmann, *Geschichte der Päpste*, Vol. II, Vorrede, quoted by Fritz Valjavec in *Die Entstehung der politischen Strömungen in Deutschland 1770-1815* (Munich, Oldenbourg, 1951), p. 28.

men invariably sinks into barbarism and destroys itself, whereupon the survivors turn back to divine guidance, and the cycle begins again.[26]

Whereas the Enlightenment glorified the classical age and its own era, the Counter-Enlightenment tended to glorify the Old Testament era and the Middle Ages. We shall find specific examples of this in due course.

Politically, the Counter-Enlightenment position is not easy to characterize, but it tended to reflect the particularist view that has been mentioned. Nationality was favoured over cosmopolitanism, local laws and customs were preferred to general notions of rights and justice. Also, along with the pessimistic view of humankind went a distrust of reform, a respect for tradition and a deference towards authority, even when it was given to cruelties and abuses. Belief in the divine right of kings is a recurring theme that will be encountered among Counter-Enlightenment thinkers.

In their writings, the men of the Counter-Enlightenment often opposed the clarity of the Enlightenment writers with a deliberate opacity. Again, Hamann is an example.

These, I would argue, are the main features of the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment world views, stated in their most general form. These will be useful as rough criteria when examining the philosophical and ideological stance of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. It is important, however, to appreciate that these two sets of tenets are divided by no hard and fast boundary, and it is not always easy to say of a particular figure that he or she belongs to one viewpoint of the other. Vico is a good example of a person who is seen by some historians (e.g. Norman Hampson) as an Enlightenment writer, and by others (e.g. Isaiah Berlin) as a Counter-Enlightenment one. Another case in point is Isaac Newton, who, as we have seen, is regarded as a key figure of the early Enlightenment because of the rational scientific methods that he promoted. Yet it has now become clear, from the work of leading Newton scholars, that Newton's whole scientific enterprise was part and parcel of a search for a *prisca sapientia* in which biblical studies and alchemy occupied more of his attention than astronomy and optics.[27] Therefore, unless we are prepared to disqualify Newton as an proto-Enlightenment figure, we must either redefine the term "rational science" or acknowledge that it meant something different to Newton from what it means to the scientist of today. This must be borne in mind when we come to examine the alchemical activities of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz.

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[26] See Vico's *The New Science*, excerpted by Baumer, pp. 448-450.

[27] See Frank Manuel, *A Portrait of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1968), and Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs, *The Foundations of Newton's Alchemy* (Cambridge University Press, 1975).

It must also be understood that the term "Counter-Enlightenment" implies not just an anti-Enlightenment position but rather an active counter-offensive against the Enlightenment. As Epstein points out in *The Genesis of German Conservatism*, the traditionalist point of view in Germany had been largely un-selfconscious and un-articulated until it was forced on to the alert by the growth of the progressive forces. Only from about 1770, according to Epstein, did it emerge as an articulate movement in Germany.[28] Whether we adopt Berlin's wider view of the Counter-Enlightenment as going back to Vico, or whether we take Epstein's narrower view, it must surely be the case that to merit being called a Counter-Enlightenment type, a person must be either a traditionalist whose traditionalism has acquired a new urgency in the face of what he sees as the Enlightenment threat, or someone who is converted, as Hamann was, to the traditionalist point of view and becomes an ardent defender of his new cause.

A further difficulty in characterizing the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment is that they took markedly different forms in different countries, and it would be useful at this point to outline the particular features of the German Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment, to which I shall usually refer as the *Aufklärung* and anti-*Aufklärung*.

First it would be helpful to say something about the word *Aufklärung* itself. The use of the word to mean what historians now mean by the Enlightenment was a narrow application of a term that had much wider connotations and continued to be used in its broader sense alongside the more specialized meaning, which it did not acquire until the last third of the 18th century. Furthermore it was often appropriated and used in a positive way by the enemies of secularity, rationalism and the other features associated with the Enlightenment. It is used by these elements up to as late as the second half of the 19th century.[29] Thus we shall often find the "anti-*Aufklärer*" presenting themselves as upholders of the "true *Aufklärung*". According to Brunner, Conze and Koselleck in their *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*:

> The term *Aufklärung*, by the definition that prevails today, signifies the European movement of thought, beginning in the second half of the 17th century and culminating in the 18th, which, through a ... process of secularization, ushered in the modern era and led to a "de-mystification of the world" [*Entzauberung der Welt*] (Max Weber). The aim of this "de-mystification" is in principle the emancipation of human beings from the world of historical tradition, that is to say their liberation from all authorities, teachings, systems, allegiances, institutions and conven-

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[28] Klaus Epstein, *The Genesis of German Conservatism* (Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 23.

[29] *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, edited by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck, 4 vols. (Stuttgart, Ernst Klett/J.G. Cotta, 1972-82), Vol. I, pp. 243-4.

> tions which cannot withstand critical examination by the autonomous human faculty of reason.[30]

Here the term is used in a European context, but where it is used to refer to the German Enlightenment it must be qualified in a number of ways. To a certain extent the ideas and modes of the German *Aufklärung* were taken from abroad. English writers such as Locke and Shaftesbury, and French ones such as Descartes and Voltaire, were widely read by the *Aufklärer*. Furthermore the style of the *Aufklärung* was deeply imbued with French influences, and the French language was widely admired as a medium for refined discourse. Frederick the Great, for example, who was well read in the literature of the French Enlightenment, wrote in French and preferred to speak it rather than German. In certain important respects, however, the German *Aufklärung* differed from the French or English versions of the Enlightenment. Although the basic Enlightenment philosophy, which I have attempted to outline, remains a useful point of reference in the German context, it must be appreciated that when this philosophy fell on German soil it often took root in strange and contradictory ways. To understand this it is necessary to look at social, political and religious factors.

Germany in the 18th century was a collection of nearly 2,000 sovereign entities,[31] including large states, free cities, bishoprics and dukedoms, all owing a loose allegiance to the Holy Roman Emperor, usually in the person of a Habsburg monarch. German society was thus highly decentralized, and there was no single focal point, like London or Paris, to act as a vortex of intellectual and cultural life. Consequently there was a corresponding heterogeneity in the *Aufklärung*, with local interests and influences playing a greater role than in the English or French Enlightenment.

Each one of the political entities in Germany had an administrative bureaucracy which, in the aftermath of the Thirty Years' War, had greatly increased in size and power. The old entrepreneurial class had been greatly weakened by the war. By contrast, the princes had extended their role in the economy. For example, the mining industry, formerly largely private, was now almost exclusively run by the states. Hence the number of people directly dependent on the rulers for their livelihood was large. In Weimar and Munich they constituted more than one third of the population.[32]

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[30] *Ibid.*, p. 245.

[31] Friedrich Hertz, *The Development of the German Public Mind*, 2 vols. (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1957, 1962), Vol. I, p. 35.

[32] T.C.W. Blanning, *Reform and Revolution in Mainz 1743-1803* (Cambridge University Press, 1974).

Whereas in France and Britain the middle class was an important carrier of Enlightenment ideas, its German counterpart cannot be so easily characterized. In so far as it had Enlightenment leanings, the German industrial and commercial middle class tended to favour what Jonathan Knudsen calls the *ständische Aufklärung* (corporate Enlightenment), that is to say the strand of the *Aufklärung* that remained loyal to the old corporatist institutions of the individual states and localities.[33] The other strand of the *Aufklärung*, characterized by the reforming efforts of rulers, found its supporters largely in the stratum known as *die Gebildeten* (literally, "the educated ones"), who included nobles, diplomats, officers, scholars, artists and clergymen.[34] This class to a large extent overlapped with officialdom. Writers and thinkers, for example, instead of being members of a literary class alienated from the state as so many were in France, enjoyed positions as librarians, estate administrators, political secretaries, lawyers, tax officials and the like. This administrative class was fed by the growing number of respected universities in Germany, which had a close relationship with officialdom. Many professors moved from academe to public affairs and back again. Hence most of the German intelligentsia saw their interests as being closely bound up with the established political order within their respective states, an order which was, for the most part, aristocratically dominated. Furthermore they often regarded their rulers as champions of the people vis-à-vis the imperial authority in Vienna.

As for the rulers themselves, they were often the most energetic promoters of *Aufklärung* policies. The phenomenon of the "enlightened despot" is one of the most striking features of the German *Aufklärung*, and the outstanding example is, of course, Frederick the Great, under whose reign (1740-1786) Prussia became the nerve centre of the *Aufklärung*. Later Joseph II brought to the Habsburg lands his own brand of enlightened despotism, and other rulers, such as Karl Friedrich of Baden, carried out enlightenment policies.

In the second half of the 18th century the *Aufklärung* gained ground all over Germany. To begin with it was an alliance between the enlightened rulers, the intellectuals and a large part of the aristocracy. For the most part, these *Gebildeten* did not adopt an egalitarian view of enlightenment. They thought that the masses should be educated only to the degree that would enable them to fulfil their roles in the existing social and political structure. The same applied to other aspects of enlightened reform. Thus, as has been recognized by recent

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[33] Jonathan B. Knudsen, *Justus Möser and the German Enlightenment* (Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[34] Joachim Whaley, "The Protestant Enlightenment in Germany", in *The Enlightenment in a National Context*, edited by Roy Porter and Mikulás Teich (Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 110.

historians of the period, the *Aufklärung* to a large extent tended to reinforce rather than break down the old hierarchical framework. As Joachim Whaley points out: "An inherently conservative nobility in Germany could be enlightened since the 'true enlightenment' posed no threat to its position."[35] This is a highly significant point since it means that one cannot, in the German context, assume that conservative aristocratic interests per se coincided with a Counter-Enlightenment position.

Another point that must be emphasized is the diversity of views as to what the concept of *Aufklärung* meant. An intense public debate on this subject was touched off by the famous prize essay question which members of the Prussian Academy were set by Frederick the Great in 1780: *Est-il utile au peuple d'être trompé, soit qu'on l'induise dans de nouvelles erreurs, ou qu'on l'entretienne dans celles ou il est?* (Is it beneficial to the people that they should be deceived, either by being led into new misconceptions or by being kept under existing ones?) Out of the 33 competitors whose entries were accepted, 13 answered in the affirmative and 20 in the negative.[36] Over the course of the next decade many people expressed their views in print on this issue and on the wider question of what *Aufklärung* was. Philosophically the participants divided broadly into, on the one hand, those who saw enlightenment as the discovery and dissemination of knowledge, and, on the other, those who saw it as essentially the development of the power of reasoning.[37] There was also a divergence of opinion as to the social implications of enlightenment. In 1784 two prominent figures addressed the question of what enlightenment meant: Moses Mendelssohn in an article in the *Berlinische Monatschrift*, and Immanuel Kant in his famous essay *Zur Beantwortung der Frage: was ist Aufklärung?* Mendelssohn's view of *Aufklärung* was essentially as a social and educational process, and he recognized the possible conflict between the imperatives of objective truth and the needs of society. Kant, on the other hand, defined *Aufklärung* as "the escape of Man from his self-incurred tutelage". For Kant enlightenment was an individual process and involved moral and intellectual but not necessarily political liberation.[38]

A striking feature of the debate was the number of Protestant clergymen who took part. Some, like Johann Melchior Goeze of Hamburg, opposed the ideas of the *Aufklärung* as undermining the foundations of religious and civil life. Most, however, defended the *Aufklärung*, and their pronouncements emphasized that the function of religion was primarily to help humanity and so-

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[35] *Ibid.*, p. 111.
[36] Werner Schneiders, *Die Wahre Aufklärung* (Freiburg/Munich, Karl Alber, 1974), p. 28.
[37] Whaley, p. 108.
[38] Schneiders, pp. 43-62.

ciety rather than serve God.[39] These pronouncements also reveal the optimism and progressive view of history that is characteristic of the Enlightenment outlook as a whole. In 1783, for example, Georg Joachim Zollikofer, a well-known Reformed preacher in Leipzig published a sermon entitled *Der Werth der grössern Aufklärung der Menschen*, in which he stated: "At the present time there reigns, by and large, less ignorance, less superstition and blind belief than in the time of our fathers."[40] There was thus a close link between the Protestant churches and the *Aufklärung*, and few *Aufklärer* rejected religion as such. Indeed Christoph Friedrich Nicolai was not expressing an unusual view when he saw his own age as the fulfillment of the Lutheran Reformation.[41] *Aufklärung*, therefore, was widely seen not just as a spreading of knowledge but as a positive moral force.

The religious dimension is of particular importance to any understanding of the *Aufklärung*. In order to understand this it is necessary to appreciate the profound way in which Germany was affected by the aftermath of the Reformation and the wars of religion. The principle of *cuius regio eius religio* continued to apply after the Peace of Westphalia (1648), and religious refugees from one state to another were found well into the 18th century. Germans of a liberal disposition were acutely aware of the misery caused by sectarian hostility. Thus their liberalism was, in Henri Brunschvig's words "not primarily an attack on social privilege, as in France, nor an appeal to the proponents of economic reform, as in England, but a demand for religious peace."[42]

The *Aufklärung* began in the Protestant north and spread south. For example, the educational innovations, pioneered in the north were widely adopted in the southern Catholic countries. Although the Catholic territories were generally more resistant to the *Aufklärung* than the Protestant ones, and although the Jesuit order vigorously opposed it, many Catholics, including a significant number of clergy, supported it.[43] Joseph II, despite his anti-clerical measures and his independent stance from the Pope, remained a Catholic throughout his life.

A phenomenon that is of particular significance in the religious life of Germany was the emergence of Pietism. This was a movement for the regeneration of Protestantism, which placed emphasis on inward experience, virtuous

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[39] Whaley, p. 113.

[40] Schneiders, p. 32.

[41] Whaley, p. 111.

[42] Henri Brunschvig, *Enlightenment and Romanticism in Eighteenth-Century Prussia* (first published, Paris, 1947; English translation by Frank Jellineck, University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 9.

[43] T.C.W. Blanning, "The Enlightenment in Catholic Germany", in *The Enlightenment in a National Context* (see note 31), pp. 118-26.

living, good works and the feeling and emotional side of religion, as against the ossified dogmatism that had come to dominate German Protestantism. It had a strong mystical component, and it strove to narrow the gulf between the clergy and the laity. For the most part, however, the Pietists attempted to work within the Lutheran Church and later the Reformed Church. Although it has earlier roots, the movement can be said to have begun in 1675 with the publication of Philip Jakob Spener's *Pia Desideria*. By 1700 there were about 32 German cities in which the Pietists had attained a position of great influence.[44] Halle, under the leadership of Spener's follower August Hermann Francke, became the great centre of the movement in its early stages. The movement had counterparts in other countries, such as Jansenism and Quietism in France and Methodism and Quakerism in England. The relationship of Pietism to the *Aufklärung* is a complex one, and there was a good deal of interaction between the two. In its egalitarianism, its social concerns and its dislike of coercive religion, it had much in common with the *Aufklärung*. On the other hand, it was Pietist influence that brought about the expulsion of the great *Aufklärung* figure, Christian Wolff, from the University of Halle in 1723. Furthermore, many leading anti-*Aufklärung* figures, such as J.G.Hamann, were either Pietists or strongly imbued with Pietist influence, while many pro-*Aufklärung* figures, such as C.F. Nicolai, had been given a Pietist upbringing but had violently revolted against it. Pietism can be seen as part of a strong mystical stream in German life and thought which, as Brunschvig writes, "under various names and either through organized sects such as Pietism or through isolated individuals such as Böhme and Franz von Baader, relieves souls oppressed by the tutelage of reason".[45]

From this account of the complexities of the *Aufklärung*, it will be apparent that there is no simple scale for measuring degrees of enlightenment in the German context. It must also be borne in mind that the *Aufklärung* changed over time. Initially, as has been said, it was an alliance between *Gebildeten* and enlightened rulers and aristocrats. This began to break down, however, as enlightened absolutism found itself under attack from two opposite sides. On the one hand the enlightened rulers came in for increasing criticism from the radical *Aufklärer* who had been supporters of enlightened despotism but were becoming impatient for more far-reaching legal and constitutional reform than the rulers were able or willing to deliver.[46] This faction grew more vociferous from the 1770s, and was greatly inspired by the American Revolution of 1776.

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[44] Koppel S. Pinson, *Pietism as a Factor in the Rise of German Nationalism* (New York, Octagon Books, 1968), p. 17.

[45] Brunschvig, p. 22.

[46] Richard van Dülmen, *Der Geheimbund der Illuminaten* (Stuttgart, Frommann-Holzboog, 1975; 2nd edition, 1977), pp. 17-18.

Its voice was heard, for example, in the large number of radical journals that appeared in those years. It found its ultimate expression in the order of the Illuminati, which flourished from the late 1770s until about 1787.

From the opposite direction the enlightened rulers were opposed by an anti-*Aufklärung* current which began to be evident from about the middle of the century. This faction was opposed to the undermining of religious and traditional values and to the importation of radical and subversive ideas from abroad, especially from France. Its supporters were a motley group, drawn from all classes and religious denominations and from all parts of Germany, though they were particularly strong in certain areas. A coterie of them existed in Mainz from 1774. Here a conservative religious journal was published by the ex-Jesuit Hermann Goldhagen. Many other ex-Jesuits were involved in the anti-*Aufklärung* movement. A group of them at Augsburg, for example, issued a stream of publications that found sympathetic readers in the north as well as the south. Another group of ex-Jesuits worked from Lucerne in Switzerland for the same cause, keeping in close touch with their Augsburg brethren and extending their influence to south Germany and Austria. The Tirol, with its strong Baroque tradition, was an important centre of opposition to Josephinism. Apart from these Jesuit groups, there were many other centres of opposition to the *Aufklärung*, such as the circle of religiously minded people in Münster surrounding Freiherr von Fürstenberg and Princess Adelheid Amalie von Gallitzin. Hamann and Hoffmann have already been mentioned as leading individuals of the anti-*Aufklärung*. Another was Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801), Swiss pastor of mystical inclinations and author of a famous work on physiognomy. He enjoyed an enormous circle of followers and friends throughout Germany, Protestant and Catholic alike.[47]

Both of these factions struggled for influence at the courts of Germany during the years leading up to the French Revolution. At first the conservative faction did not measure up in strength to its rival, but with the growing demands of the radical faction, and after the Illuminati affair and especially after the French Revolution, the rulers came increasingly to fall back on conservative positions and to make common cause with the anti-*Aufklärung* faction which, by the late 1780s, was a considerable force in Germany.

So far we have conceived of the *Aufklärung* and Counter-*Aufklärung* as two broad movements or currents. In fact, however, this dualism is misleading. Heinrich Schneider, in his *Quest for Mysteries*, divides the religious life of 18th-century Germany into four separate groups: (1) the Catholic and Prot-

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[47] Fritz Valjavec, *Die Entstehung der politischen Strömungen in Deutschland 1770-1815* (Munich, Oldenbourg, 1951), pp. 258-65.

estant churches; (2) Pietism and related or parallel religious movements; (3) pantheistic and mystical tendencies; (4) the adherents of a religion of Enlightenment.[48] While basically accepting this analysis, I would see groups 2 and 3 as variations of the same phenomenon. Thus, I would argue, it is possible to discern three basic currents or groups of currents operating at the religious-intellectual-philosophical level in Germany: (1) the established churches; (2) Enlightenment tendencies; (3) the complex of theosophical, mystical, hermetic and Pietistic tendencies of which Rosicrucianism was part. As we shall observe, the third tendency was often as much in conflict with the first as with the second, but was also capable of allying itself with either. Without wishing to present this three-fold view in too hard-and-fast a manner, I believe that the notion of a "third current" can help us in perceiving how the Rosicrucian revival fitted into the religious, intellectual and cultural history of Germany. Both the *Aufklärung* and the "third current" sought to satisfy a desire for an expansion of human possibilities that could not be satisfied within the confines of traditional, mainstream religion. At the same time the "third current" also implied a spiritual thirst that could not be quenched by rationality. The figure of Faust, seeking in the realm of magic what he could not find in science or religion, is the classic personification of this predicament. His real-life counterparts, as we shall find, often steered an uncertain course, sometimes joining one current, sometimes another.

Having outlined the basic philosophical issues behind the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment, and having given a picture of the many interacting ideas, interests and movements that constitute the German *Aufklärung* and anti-*Aufklärung*, we may now proceed to examine the Rosicrucian revival and to see how it fits into this complex picture.

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[48] Heinrich Schneider, *Quest for Mysteries: The Masonic Background for Literature in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1947), p. 25.

CHAPTER TWO

ROSICRUCIANISM FROM ITS ORIGINS TO THE EARLY 18TH CENTURY

In order to understand the 18th-century Rosicrucian revival it is necessary to know something of the origins and early history of Rosicrucianism. This ground has already been covered many times,[1] but it is worth covering it again here in broad outline as a prelude to my main investigation.

The Rosicrucian legend was born in the early 17th century in the uneasy period before religious tensions in Central Europe erupted into the Thirty Years' War. The Lutheran Reformation of a century earlier had finally shattered the religious unity of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. On the other hand, as the historian Geoffrey Parker has observed, the Reformation had not produced the spiritual renewal that its advocates had hoped for.[2]

In the prevailing atmosphere of political and religious tension and spiritual malaise, many people turned, in their dismay, to the old millenarian dream of a new age. This way of thinking, dating back to the writings of the 12th-century Calabrian abbot Joachim of Fiore, had surfaced at various times in the intervening centuries, giving rise to movements of the kind described by Norman Cohn in his *Pursuit of the Millennium*[3] and by Marjorie Reeves in her *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*.[4] Joachim and his followers saw history as unfolding in a series of three ages, corresponding to the three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in that order. They believed that hitherto they had been living in the Age of the Son, but that the Age of the Spirit was at hand. In the meantime there would be a period of purgation presided over by the Anti-Christ. When the new age would begin was debatable, and Joachim's arithmetic was manipulated to produce many different

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1 See for example: Will-Erich Peuckert, *Das Rosenkreuz* (reprint, Berlin, Erich Schmidt, 1973); Hans Schick, *Das ältere Rosenkreuzertum* (Berlin, Nordland Verlag, 1943; second edition, 1980); Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972); and Christopher McIntosh, *The Rosicrucians* (first published as *The Rosy Cross Unveiled*, Wellingborough, Thorsons, 1980; re-issued in revised form as *The Rosicrucians*, 1987).

2 Professor Parker addressed this question in his special lecture, "The First Century of the Reformation: Success or Failure?", delivered at Oxford on 23 January 1987.

3 Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London, Secker and Warburg, 1957; paperback, London, Paladin, 1970).

4 Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (London, SPCK, 1976).

possible dates, but there was a wide expectation in Germany that the new age would begin some time in the early years of the 17th century.

These millenarian expectations went hand in hand with an esoteric viewpoint that drew on a variety of sources including Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, the Hermetic tradition, Kabbalah and alchemy and was represented by the writings of such men as Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, Jacob Boehme and Heinrich Khunrath. As R.J.W. Evans remarks:

> Occult undertakings were inseparable from a religious standpoint close to the mysticism of some sixteenth-century heterodoxy, and the occult rejection of a rational approach to the world often stood in alliance with a spiritual rejection of both brands of established religion, the Protestant and the Roman Catholic. That held especially true in German lands, where the Renaissance magical tradition of Trithemius, Agrippa, and Paracelsus was steeped in Neoplatonism and intimately linked with the mystical experience of men like Valentine Weigel.[5]

This esoteric gnosis (using the term in its wider sense) was soon to be challenged by the advance of an increasingly mechanistic science, but in the early 17th century it was still vital enough to provide a powerful source of inspiration, capable of transcending religious barriers and offering a vision of a society nourished by ancient wisdom while advancing fearlessly into the future.

Given the vitality of this gnosis in Germany and the fact that the German lands were the main theatre of sectarian conflict, it was natural that many Germans who hoped for a better age should express their vision in terms of the esoteric tradition. Such were the conditions out of which grew the phenomenon known as Rosicrucianism, the history of whose emergence is briefly as follows.

In 1614 there was published at Kassel in Hesse a curious text of anonymous authorship entitled the *Fama Fraternitatis dess Löblichen Ordens des Rosenkreutzes*,[6] which had evidently already been circulating in manuscript form. The Fama described a fraternity founded by one "C.R.C." or "C.Ros.C." (it was assumed that these letters stood for "Christian Rosenkreutz"), a German who in his youth had travelled to the Arab world and there studied science and the magical arts. On his return to Germany he had founded the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross, whose members devoted themselves to healing the sick and to spreading wisdom, but always working incognito. When the founder died his place of burial was kept secret, but recently, says the Fama, the brethren have discovered the vault containing his body along with various books and arti-

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5 R.J.W. Evans, *Rudolf II and his World* (Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 197.

6 Most conveniently available in: Johann Valentin Andreae, *Fama Fraternitatis / Confessio Fraternitatis / Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosenkreutz*, introduced and edited by Richard van Dülmen (Stuttgart, Calwer Verlag, 1973).

facts. This discovery of the vault is proclaimed by the Fama to herald the dawn of a new age. At the end of the text comes an invitation to all the learned of Europe to communicate with the Brotherhood. Although the whereabouts of the brethren was not revealed, it was stated that anyone who attempted to convey a message to them would be heard.

Bound together with the first edition of the Fama was a work entitled *Allgemeine und General Reformation der gantzen weiten Welt*, a translation of an extract from an Italian satire, *Ragguagli di Parnasso* (News from Parnassus) by Trajano Boccalini, in which a number of historical and contemporary figures are depicted presenting various complaints about the state of the world to Apollo on Parnassus. Also included in the same volume was a reply to the brotherhood by one Adam Haselmayer, for which, according to the title page, he was seized by the Jesuits and put in irons on a galley. Haselmayer's reply could be included in the printed version since, as he states, he had seen a manuscript of the text in the Tyrol in 1610.

In 1615, the year following the first edition of the Fama, a second Rosicrucian manifesto was published, also in Kassel and again with no author's name. It was called the *Confessio Fraternitatis*. This time the text was in Latin, though a German version soon followed. It repeated the message of the Fama, adding further claims about the fraternity's possession of secret knowledge and promising that in the coming new age there would be instituted a government of wise men, as at Damcar in Arabia (one of the places visited by Christian Rosenkreuz) where "wise and understanding people reign, people whom the King allows to make particular laws".[7] An end would be made to the Pope's tyranny, and a reign of light would ensue in which the world "would wake out of its heavy sleep and, with open heart, bareheaded and with naked feet, would go to meet the newly rising sun".[8] Throughout the *Fama* and *Confessio* the Christian, and specifically Protestant, nature of the brotherhood was constantly emphasized.

What sort of world did the authors of these manifestos wish to bring about? The opening pages of the Fama rejoice in the fact that a new divine dispensation is evident, which has made possible an increased knowledge of Christ and of Nature. Wise men have been enabled to discover truths about the world which had previously remained hidden. Nevertheless, despite these advances, the world of learning is still marked by disunity, ignorance and a dogmatic

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[7] *Ibid.*, p. 36. Original: "... weise und verstendige Leute darinn herrschen, welchen es vom König zugelassen, besondere Gesetz daselbst zu machen."

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 39. Original: "... wenn die Welt nemblich von ihrem schweren Schlaff auffwachen und der new auffgehenden Sonnen, mit eröffnetem Hertzen, entblöstem Haupt und nacketen Füssen frölich und frewdig entgegen gehen wird."

adherence to thinkers such as Porphyry, Aristotle and Galen. The mission of the Rosicrucian brotherhood is to bring about a new unity among the learned, based on an all-embracing tradition of universal gnosis handed on from the sages of antiquity. References are made to the Kabbalah and to the wisdom of the Arabians. The alchemist Paracelsus is mentioned with reverence, though the making of gold through alchemy is dismissed as a trivial activity much abused by tricksters. The Rosicrucian vision was therefore both traditional and radical, both theological and scientific. It drew its inspiration from an ancient source of wisdom and at the same time represented a break with the prevailing spirit in the world of learning. It was emphatically Christian yet looked forward to an age when religion and science would work hand in hand.

Another point worth underlining is that, while the manifestos address Christendom as a whole, the theme of German nationhood is undeniably present. The *Fama* for example, states that the Fraternity should be "helpful to the whole Fatherland of the German Nation".[9] This theme is underlined by the fact the *Fama* was published in German and not in Latin—a significant fact bearing in mind that it was not until 1687 that a course of university lectures was delivered in the German tongue.

It is apparent, therefore, that the message of the manifestos could mean a variety of things to different people, depending on which of these themes was emphasized. As we shall see, the Rosicrucians of the 18th century interpreted the message in a way that would in many ways have surprised their 17th-century predecessors.

After the publication of the *Fama* and *Confessio* there appeared in 1616 a third text which posterity has grouped with the first two although it is very different in character, being a work of fiction. This was the *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosenkreutz*, published at Strassburg in German. In this work the narrator, purportedly Christian Rosenkreuz himself (his full name appears here for the first time), describes his experiences as a guest (not as the bridegroom) at the wedding of a King and Queen. The narrative covers seven days, and the events take place in and around a marvellous castle. The story contains deep layers of allegory and symbolism, and the central theme is that of alchemical transmutation interpreted in a spiritual sense.

The *Chymische Hochzeit*, like the *Fama* and *Confessio*, was published with no author's name given, but it is now generally thought that the author was the Tübingen Protestant theologian Johann Valentin Andreae who claimed authorship of the work in his *Vita ab ipso conscripta* (not published until 1799). It

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9 *Ibid.*, p. 24. Original: "... dem gemeinen Vatterland Teutscher Nation behülflich ... sein."

is also now widely thought that Andreae was also the author, or at least co-author of the *Fama*.[10]

The immediate effect of the publication of the *Fama* and *Confessio* was to stir up a heated controversy, initially in Germany and then in other parts of Europe. Between 1614 and 1622 nearly 200 answers to the invitation contained in the *Fama* were published in various places, most of them anonymously,[11] bearing witness to the hopes and expectations which the vaunted brotherhood had aroused. Among those initially attracted by the brotherhood's claims was Descartes, who attempted to find the Rosicrucians while serving in Germany with the army of the Duke of Bavaria.[12]

In addition to the published letters addressed to the Rosicrucian brotherhood, there soon appeared books by authors who claimed to speak for the brotherhood or who argued on its behalf. There also appeared a number of attacks on the brotherhood. Meanwhile the brethren themselves remained silent. No one knew who they were or if they existed at all outside the imaginations of those who had written the manifestos. But, whether they existed or not, the fact was that a powerful legend had taken root, a legend that has remained alive ever since and has spawned a great variety of movements claiming the title Rosicrucian, not to mention a vast and growing body of writing on the subject.

In the turmoil of the Thirty Years' War the Rosicrucian furore died down, and after the 1620s little was heard of the brotherhood in Germany for nearly a century, although it continued to be a topic of interest in other countries, especially in England. The physician and alchemist Robert Fludd, for example, defended the Rosicrucians in a series of works published between 1616 and 1633. Another English apologist for Rosicrucianism was Thomas Vaughan, who produced, in 1652, the first printed English translation of the *Fama* and *Confessio*. A translation of the *Chemical Wedding* by Ezechiel Foxcroft followed in 1690.

In Germany during this period there are very few references to Rosicrucianism, and those that exist are mostly negative. Leibniz, for example, wrote in a letter in 1696: "Fratres Rosae Crucis fictitios fuisse suspicior quod et Helmontius mihi confirmavit".[13] According to Marx, the only reference we have that points to a continuation of the brotherhood in Germany is in Wilhelm

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[10] Van Dülmen writes that "innere und äußere Gründe sprechen für seine Verfasserschaft". *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[12] Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 114.

[13] Marx, *Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, p. 12.

von Schroeder's *Nothwendiger Unterricht vom Goldmachen* (1684): "I do not know what I should say about the Brethren of the Rosy Cross. I believe that they owe their origin to a few philosophers of understanding and experience in the ways of nature. At the same time I am convinced that subsequently all kinds of gipsy scoundrels [*allerhand Zigeuner-Gesindlein*] made use of the same title to deceive honourable people, and I know this all too well."[14] This suggests an unhappy first-hand acquaintance with people who called themselves Rosicrucians and falsely claimed to possess alchemical secrets.

It was not until the early 18th century that Rosicrucianism once again began to show signs of being a topic of public interest in the country of its origin. What now emerged, however, was a rather different picture of Rosicrucianism from the one that had been evinced a century earlier. Before examining the revival in detail it will be helpful if we compare the old and new forms of Rosicrucianism in relation to their respective eras.

It is important to ask whether the movement, in its early form, can be seen as a proto-Enlightenment force or a proto-Counter-Enlightenment one. In addressing this question, Michael W. Fischer, in *Die Aufklärung und ihr Gegenteil*, convincingly argues for the former. He points out that the notion of progress, much emphasized in the Rosicrucian manifestos, had undergone a fundamental change in the Renaissance. Whereas up to the Renaissance, change had been seen primarily as a falling away from an original paradisical state, now any technical innovations were counted as progress because they were in principle capable of diminishing hardship, illness and danger and of opening up new possibilities for human life. The retrospective mentality of the Middle Ages was thus replaced by the prospect of a future with basically limitless possibilities.[15]

In assessing the early Rosicrucian movement, he writes:

> The denial of the dogmatically rigid restrictions and regimentation of the Church, the passionate belief in natural science as the way to all-round progress, the possession of an open world-view and the yearning for religious unity and mutuality, the ... striving for the harmony of religion and science and above all the call for a general reformation of "the whole wide world"—all of these are integral parts of the secret fraternity of the Rosicrucians. Thus Rosicrucianism, as a transition between the Renaissance and the scientific societies of the 17th century, forms a point of crystallization. In its mode of thinking one can discern an early form of the *Aufklärung* which in many respects was seminal to the further development of European science and culture.[16]

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[14] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[15] Michael W. Fischer, *Die Aufklärung und ihr Gegenteil* (Berlin, Duncker und Humblot, 1982), pp. 34-5.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Although the later Rosicrucianism, as embodied in the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, came to be linked with the anti-*Aufklärung*, there remained in the 18th century some apologists for the older form who regarded the Gold- und Rosenkreuz as imposters and betrayers of the true spirit of Rosicrucianism. The anonymous author, for example, of *Kurzgefaβte Geschichte der Rosenkreuzer* (1784), writes that the true Rosicrucians have long since ceased to work as a united body, and that those who have appeared in the past 20 to 30 years calling themselves Rosicrucians are imposters.[17] It was, however, the form promoted by the Gold- und Rosenkreuz that became chiefly associated with Rosicrucianism in the 18th century, and between this and the earlier form there was a wide gulf, due partly to a change in the nature of Rosicrucianism itself and partly to a change in the mental climate of the age.

As Klaus Epstein writes in *The Genesis of German Conservatism*: "It can be said only that both types of Rosicrucianism stood in a tradition of mystical piety which had long been one aspect of German culture, generally persecuted by orthodoxy when it was not ignored. This tradition confronted dogmatism with pietism, orthodoxy with mysticism, Aristotelianism with Platonism."[18]

It is true that both movements were linked by the same "tradition of mystical piety". In the interval between them, however, a crucial change had taken place in the intellectual climate of Europe. The early Rosicrucianism was one manifestation of a gnosis that played a vital part in European thought. Men such as Paracelsus, J.B. Porta and John Dee were not eccentrics operating on the fringe of learning but were part of the whole thrust of the intellectual endeavour of their age. To quote R.J.W. Evans again, "it is important to see that the whole mentality of occultism—in its broadest sense—belongs integrally within the cosmology of late Renaissance Europe".[19] In the early 17th century this occult gnosis was very much alive and could in many respects be seen as a progressive influence. The thinkers who were keen to overthrow the fossilized Aristotelianism, which had dominated the universities for so long, were often steeped not only in Platonism but in the world of Kabbalah and Hermeticism. A case in point was Paracelsus, who helped to revolutionize the medicine of his time.

Such was the climate at the time of the early Rosicrucian movement. But by the time the new Rosicrucianism made its appearance the scientific revolution of the 17th century had taken place. The old Aristotelianism of the universities had indeed been overturned, but its place had been taken not by a revived

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[17] Anon., *Kurzgefaβte Geschichte der Rosenkreuzer* (no place of publication indicated, 1784), Preface, pp. i-v.

[18] *Op. cit.* (Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 105-6.

[19] Evans, *Rudolph II and his World*, p. 243.

Platonism but by the mechanistic system of Descartes and his followers. As Keith Thomas writes:

"The essence of the revolution was the triumph of the mechanical philosophy. It involved the rejection both of scholastic Artistotelianism and of the Neoplatonic theory which had temporarily threatened to take its place. With the collapse of the microcosm theory went the destruction of the whole intellectual basis of astrology, chiromancy, alchemy, physiognomy, astral magic and their associates."[20] The Platonists and Hermeticists had fought a brave rearguard action, marked by many skirmishes such as the much-publicised controversy between Fludd and Mersenne; but by the early 18th century the tradition they represented was being overtaken by the rising tide of the new science.

In the German lands, however, there was an unusually strong survival of the old alchemical-kabbalistic-Hermetic outlook, a fact which is of key importance in the subsequent intellectual history of the nation. Although the new scientific spirit gained ground in Germany as everywhere else, it took longer than it did elsewhere to supplant the older tradition (the survival of alchemy will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter). It is in this context that the revival of Rosicrucianism must be seen.

Those who espoused the new Rosicrucianism did so in a different spirit from that of their 17th-century predecessors. The former had seen themselves as promoting the advent of a new age and a new kind of society, and they saw no conflict between religion and the advance of science. The neo-Rosicrucians, on the other hand, saw themselves as upholding an ancient tradition of wisdom and piety which, although still strong in Germany, was to find itself increasingly marginalized.

What sparked off the renewal of interest in Rosicrucianism was the publication at Breslau in 1710 of *Die wahrhaffte und volkommene Bereitung des philosophischen Steins der Brüderschaft aus dem Orden des Gülden und Rosen Kreutzes*.[21] It was written by one Sincerus Renatus, whose real name was Samuel Richter,[22] a Protestant pastor from Silesia. Although he drew on the same tradition of esoteric gnosis as the one that inspired the earlier Rosicrucians, the brotherhood he described (of whose actual existence there is no hard and fast evidence) was not the same as its predecessor. It lacked the anti-papal spirit of the *Fama* and *Confessio* and allowed Roman Catholic

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[20] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Declie of Magic* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1978), p. 769.

[21] S[incerus] R[enatus], *Die wahrhaffte und volkommene Bereitung des philosophischen Steins der Brüderschaft aus dem Orden des Gülden und Rosen-Creutzes* (Breslau, Fellgiebel, 1710).

[22] See entry in Wolfstieg, August, *Bibliographie der freimaurerischen Literatur*, (3 vols., Burg/Leipzig, Verein Deutscher Freimaurer, 1911-13), Vol. II, entry 42481, p. 955.

members. Furthermore the Rosy Cross had now become the Golden and Rosy Cross, and this was indicative of a new alchemical emphasis. Whereas the earlier Rosicrucian writings make only brief and reserved references to alchemy, in Renatus's order it has become a central preoccupation, with each brother receiving a portion of the Philosopher's Stone on his initiation. As well as describing a number of alchemical processes, Renatus gives many details of the order, its rules and modes of greeting. When two brethren meet each other one brother says "Ave, Frater", to which the other replies "Roseae et Aureae", the first then adding the word "Crucis". Having thus established each other's status, they then say to each other "Benedictus Dominus Deus noster qui dedit nobis signum".[23]

Arnold Marx points out a number of inconsistencies in this work. For example, in one place the author states that the Imperator is elected for life after serving initially for ten years, while in another place he declares that the eldest brother is always Imperator. Nevertheless, Marx believes that the author was a convinced alchemist who genuinely believed in the existence of the order and wished, by showing acquaintance with its laws and procedures, to apply for membership. Marx concludes from the book that at about this time a brotherhood of the Golden and Rosy Cross had been created or revived, with statutes that had been considerably altered since the time of the *Fama Fraternitatis* or the *Themis aurea* of Michael Maier (1618). Whether this organization was in fact the cradle of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz remains, he says very doubtful, although there are definite connections.[24]

What is interesting about these statutes is that, as we shall see, they crop up repeatedly, with certain variations, in many different documents, printed and unprinted, of various dates and of widely separated geographical origin but all of them in some way invoking the Rosicrucian or illuminist heritage. It is possible that all of these lists stemmed from Sincerus Renatus, but it seems more likely that Renatus's list and the others stem from an as yet unidentified common source. Whether or not any real brotherhood lay behind the statutes, the existence of these lists is striking evidence of the ubiquity of the idea of such a brotherhood.

A point that Marx does not make is that the case of Sincerus Renatus is part of the evidence pointing to a strong connection between Rosicrucianism and Pietism, something which has not been explored by historians to any great extent. Everything we know about Sincerus Renatus, alias Samuel Richter, points to his having been a Pietist. His entry in John Ferguson's *Bibliotheca Chemica* relates that he lived at the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th

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[23] Marx, p. 14.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

century, that he came from Reichau, a village in the duchy of Brieg in Silesia, and that he adopted the views of Jacob Boehme and Paracelsus. He is said to have lived for some time in Silesia as a tutor in noble houses in the principality of Brieg and also to have practised as a physician, having in his youth picked up some knowledge of chemistry and medicine from a village priest. After studying theology at Halle, he became a preacher at Hartmannsdorf in Silesia and evidently used the pulpit to advocate his Paracelsian and Böhmistic views. His writings, Ferguson states, brought him sharp criticism for the orthodox, who accused him of advancing "the blasphemous doctrines of the Manicheans".[25]

It is safe to assume that Richter was exposed to Pietist influence as a theology student at Halle, whose university was the great centre of Pietism under Francke's leadership between 1692 and 1727. His enthusiasm for Boehme is further possible evidence of Pietism, as is the pseudonymn he adopted, since the concept of rebirth (*Wiedergeburt*) is given great emphasis by Pietist writers such as Gottfried Arnold.[26]

When we read the text of *Die wahrhaffte und volkommene Bereitung* the Pietist element is unmistakable, and it is striking how Pietism, alchemy and Rosicrucianism are mingled in a way that we find repeated in later neo-Rosicrucian texts. The accusation of Manichaeism is also interesting, as a gnostic type of dualism is a theme running right through the neo-Rosicrucian writings. It is evident, for example, in the following passage from Renatus's foreword:

> How can we recognize the true separation of the blessing from the curse or of the light from the darkness if we do not even rightly know how light and darkness are distinguished and indeed have not perceived the true separation of light and darkness in our souls nor recognized the difference between the old and new birth? And how can we recognize these things in outward nature. ... For that is the purpose of the true chemistry.[27]

Renatus, in typical Pietistic manner, contrasts the true Christians, "who with an upright, childlike and simple heart become true followers of Jesus", with the people who are Christians in word and appearance only. He goes on to speak of Christ as the master who can teach us the true art of separation and how to purify ourselves of the Serpent's poison.[28]

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[25] John Ferguson, *Bibliotheca Chemica* (2 vols., London, Derek Verschoyle, 1954), Vol. II, pp. 275-6.

[26] *Pietists: Selected Writings*, edited and introduced by Peter C. Erb (London, SPCK, 1983), p. 12.

[27] Sincerus Renatus, pp. iv-v.

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. v-vi.

Pietist interest in Rosicrucianism is evident elsewhere. Gottfried Arnold, for example, writes at length about the early Rosicrucianism in his *Unparteiische Kirchen und Ketzer Historie* (1699-1700). But the alliance between Pietism and Rosicrucianism in the Gold- und Rosenkreuz is a curious one. The simple, open, direct, informal, egalitarian style of Pietism would appear to conflict with the hierarchy, secrecy and elaborate ceremonial system of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. And yet the connection between Pietism and the Rosicrucian revival is undeniable, as the case of Sincerus Renatus shows.

Other writers on the history of Rosicrucianism, including Arnold Marx himself, pass quickly over the period between Sincerus Renatus and the beginning of the masonic phase of Rosicrucianism around the 1750s. It is, however, worth considering some of the other Rosicrucian documents from this time, as they lend weight to the supposition that some form of organized neo-Rosicrucianism existed during this interval.

An important manuscript in this connection is the "Testamentum der Fraternitet Roseae et Aureae Crucis" in the Austrian National Library, Vienna.[29] This is clearly based on Sincerus Renatus, or on the same sources from which he drew, since many of the rules and procedures in it, such as the forms of greeting, are identical to those described by Renatus. At the same time there are significant changes. For example Renatus gives the total number of breth-ren as 63, while the Testamentum raises it to 77. As to the date, a note on one of the endpapers records that the manuscript was acquired by Johann Adalbert, Prinz de Buchau [sic], in 1735. We shall return to a more detailed consideration of the contents of this manuscript shortly.

A significant text of the same period is: *J.G. Toeltii, des Welt-berühmten philosophi Coelum reseratum chymicum*,[30] an alchemical work first published in 1737. In the Wellcome Institute Library, London, there are two handwritten copies of this text, one dated 1737, the other, a much cruder copy, dated 1750.[31] The Rosicrucian tenor of the work is made clear in the introduction, written by one Johann Carl von Frisau, who signs himself "Imperator". This emphatically Rosicrucian title was also attributed to a number of other figures, listed by Marx as follows:[32] Abraham van Brün of Hamburg, who allegedly

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[29] Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Cod. Ser. n. 2897. More conveniently available in printed form in Archarion, *Von wahrer Alchemie* (Freiburg im Breisgau, Hermann Bauer, 1967).

[30] *J.G. Toeltii des Welt-berühmten philosophi Coelum reseratum chymicum* (Frankfurt/Leipzig/Erfurt, Jungnicol, 1737).

[31] Mss. 4808 and 4809.

[32] Marx, pp. 15-16.

died between 1745 and 1750; Friedrich Stein, whose name appears as the author of a letter included in the collection *Dreyzehn geheime Briefe*, published in 1788 but allegedly written between 1722 and 1726;[33] Tobias Schulze of Amsterdam, said to have been Imperator up to 1769; and Schulze's successor, Kiesewetter (according to the 19th-century writer Karl Kiesewetter, who claimed to be the great-grandson of the 18th-century Kiesewetter).

Another manuscript in the Wellcome Institute Library is an anonymous work on "cabbalistic alchemy",[34] with an introductory note in a different hand, dated 1750 and signed in code with the name J.F. von Frydau, followed by the letters "F.R.C." (undoubtedly standing for Frater Rosae Crucis). In this note Frydau declares that he desires this work never to be printed or copied "sondern einzig bei den F.R.C. als ein Heiligthum und Gemeingut aufbewahrt werden solle."

It is also worth mentioning the appearance in 1721 of two other alchemical works which invoke the name of the Rosicrucian brotherhood: Ferdinand von Sabor's *Practica naturae vera* and the anonymous *Tractatus chymicus*.[35]

Even if, on the most sceptical assessment, the title of Imperator was falsely attributed to von Frisau and the others, and even if von Frydau was a purely self-styled "F.R.C.", it is clear from these documents that there existed, during the first half of the 18th century, at least a persuasive notion of a Rosicrucian fraternity possessing alchemical secrets. Thus there is clearly a pre-masonic phase of the Rosicrucian revival.

We are now in a position to examine the Rosicrucianism of this phase and see how it measures up to the spirit of the *Aufklärung* and anti-*Aufklärung* in the light of the ideas explored in the previous chapter. A suitable text to focus on is the Vienna manuscript, the *Testamentum der Fraternitet Roseae et Aureae Crucis*, already mentioned. The text opens with an introductory address to the reader:

> Dear Brother,
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> When the beloved ancient ones [*die lieben Alten*], after mature consideration as to how the Mysterium could best be concealed, decided that it should be imparted only to those who were worthy, they agreed to seek out a certain number who would be worthy and suitable for the Mysterium, who feared the Almighty ... wholeheartedly and whose mouths were sealed.

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[33] *Dreyzehn geheime Briefe von dem großen Geheimnisse des Universals und Particulars der goldenen und Rosenkreutzern, an J.V.L.* (Leipzig, Boehme, 1788).

[34] Ms. 2449.

[35] Wolfstieg, Vol. II, entries 42483 and 42484, p. 956.

The writer goes on to state that the "Mysterium" was originally confided to Noah. He then gives a somewhat confusing account of its subsequent transmission through the Jews and ancient Egyptians and later to the Chaldaeans, Romans and Arabs. Finally, he states: "From the prophets and beloved ancient ones it came down to us Germans through our father Theuth. And it has been preserved by us until today, often in a miraculous way."[36]

In certain respects this account evinces an outlook that runs counter to the *Aufklärung* spirit. The well-springs of wisdom are located in biblical and ancient Egyptian times and therefore in one of the "dark" epochs according to the Enlightenment dualistic view of history already mentioned—in Heine's terminology "Hebrews" rather than "Hellenes" are the main transmitters of the tradition. More importantly, the whole notion of a secret gnosis, handed down from age to age and accessible only to the initiated, conflicts with the optimistic epistemology that runs through so much of Enlightenment thinking. The reference to "Vater Theuth" introduces a patriotic element that runs counter to the more cosmopolitan strain in the *Aufklärung*.

On the other hand there are elements in the document that are equally in conflict with the spirit of the Counter-Enlightenment. Take, for example, the issue of religious toleration. Here is one of the principles of the order that are read out to the new brother when he joins:

> No religious envy or enmity should arise among us, but rather everyone should permit his brother to profess his own belief and be true to his own conscience. ... In as much as we know and believe that God consists of three persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and in as much as we fear and love Him and surrender ourselves to Him so that he guides, rules and leads us, indeed possesses us and dwells in us, ours is the true religion. Others, however, who, although adhering to religion, cannot wholly give themselves to God, for they are divided and cling to human demands—these are an abomination in the eyes of the Supreme Spirit, for they do not love God with full heart and soul and with all their strength. They devote their energies ... to human demands and do not love their fellow men with pure hearts. ... They are hypocrites, for the Holy One in Israel desires the heart for Himself, to be made entirely into his own temple and domain. From the beginning of the world our society has contained men of the most varied races who loved wisdom and sought the Lord. Therefore every brother, of whatever religion he may be, should live freely and be beholden to no one and be accountable to no one for his belief.

Even more striking is the following injunction:

> Furthermore a brother should reveal to no one the money he possesses; and he should be especially on his guard against all members of religious orders. For

[36] Archarion, *Von Wahrer Alchemie*, pp. 153-6.

> these carry the Devil in their hearts under the name of the High Priest and disguise their roguishness behind the words of the Almighty. Therefore brethren should avoid them, for there is rarely any good to be hoped from them. ... Thus in Austria in 1641 we lost two of our brethren because they were too open-hearted in their dealings with these people.[37]

Both of these clauses correspond in essence to clauses in Sincerus Renatus's statutes but are longer and differently worded. These quotations, in the way they evince a contempt for the outward trappings as opposed to the inner spirit of religion, are reminiscent of the language used by the Pietists. They lend further substance to the concept of a "third current", distinct from religious orthodoxy and from the Enlightenment, yet capable of mingling at times with either. Certainly such anti-clericalism and lack of sectarian rigidity is not consistent with the standard Counter-Enlightenment position, especially in a predominantly Catholic country such as Austria. It is true that in this case the anti-clericalism springs not from a rationalist stance but from a belief in a secret gnosis which alone gives validity to religion. Nevertheless it is quite possible that the holder of such views could in certain circumstances make common cause with the *Aufklärer* against the tyranny of religious orthodoxy, whether Catholic or Protestant. After all, memories of the Thirty Years' War were still fresh, as is shown by the reference to the two Austrian brethren who fell foul of the Church.

At this stage, therefore, Rosicrucianism, although it had features that ran counter to the Enlightenment in general, might still have remained broadly

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[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 157-9. The original version of the two passages quoted on page 17 is as follows:
(1) "Dass unter uns keine Frage der Religion wegen oder ein Neid angefangen werden soll, sondern ein jeder soll seinen Bruder bei Erkenntnis seines Glaubens und Treuheit seines Gewissens belassen, dass sich Gott allein vorbehalten, damit kein Hass unter uns entstehe. Und wenn wir glauben und wissen, dass Gott in 3 Personen—Pater, Filius et Spiritus—bestehe und wir fürchten denselben, lieben denselben, ergeben uns demselben, dass er uns leite, regiere und führe, ja uns besitzte und bewohne, so haben wir die rechte Religion. Die anderen aber, sie noch religiös und der Religion anhaften, können sich Gott nicht ganz ergeben, denn sie sind zerteilt und hängen an Menschen-Geboten, sie sind in den Augen des Grossen Geistes ein Greuel, denn sie lieben Gott nicht vom ganzen Herzen, von ganzer Seele, mit allen ihren Kräften. Denn ihre Kräfte, als das heiligste Opfer, unterwerfen sie den Menschen-Geboten und lieben auch nicht lauter ihren Nächsten, weil sie Heuchler sind, denn der Heilige in Israel will das Herz allein haben und ganz zu seinem Tempel und Eigentum machen. Denn von Anfang der Welt sind Männer aus den verschiedensten Völkern, so den Herrn suchten und Weisheit liebten, in unserer Versammlung gewesen. Darum soll jeder Bruder, von welcher Religion er auch immer sei, frei leben und niemandem verbunden sein oder von wegen seines Glaubens Rechenschaft geben müssen."
(2) "Auch soll ein Bruder niemandem etwas von seinem Reichtum entdecken; besonders soll er sich von allen Reiligiösen hüten. Denn diese tragen unter dem Namen der Hohepriester den Teufel im Herzen. Mit den Worten des Allerhöchsten bedecken sie ihre Schalkheit. Daher soll ein Bruder solche fliehen, weil selten was gutes von solchen zu hoffen; denn sie prätendieren gerne vor allen Menschen das Ansehen der Person. So haben wir 1641 in Osterreich zwei von unseren Brüdern wegen ihres zu offenherzigen Umganges mit demselben verloren."

compatible with the German *Aufklärung*, or at least that branch of the *Aufklärung* that remained open to the esoteric traditions that were so deeply rooted in Germany. The process by which it became linked with the counter-*Aufklärung* was to take some decades. In the meantime Rosicrucianism was to enter a new phase, in which it became allied with Freemasonry. It is to this phase that we shall turn next.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MASONIC PHASE

At this point I shall attempt to outline the early history of Freemasonry, describing briefly its origins in Britain and its dispersal to the continent of Europe, before discussing in detail the way in which it manifested itself in Germany.[1]

Freemasonry can essentially be described as a brotherhood practising a system of ethical precepts enshrined in a set of symbols and rituals connected with architecture and in particular with King Solomon's Temple, as described in the Old Testament, and its architect Hiram Abiff. Also known as "Speculative Masonry" or "the Craft", it is generally thought to be descended from the guild system of practical or "operative" masonry. The emergence of the one from the other had already begun in the British Isles by the first half of the 17th century, as is shown by the record of Elias Ashmole's initiation into a masonic lodge at a country house near Warrington in 1646, but how and precisely when the change came about is unknown. Thus, the origins of Freemasonry remain veiled in obscurity, an obscurity which has always been a fecund source of speculation and fantasy. As we shall see, many of the more extravagant outgrowths of Masonry have laid great emphasis on colourful historical claims.

The date when the flag of organized Masonry was formally raised was 1717 when the first Grand Lodge (governing body) was established in London. There were originally two degrees of initiation, entered apprentice and fellow craft, to which a third, that of master mason, was added not long afterwards. These became known as the "craft degrees", as distinct from the high degrees that developed later. Soon the movement spread overseas, taking root in France in about 1725-30, where its rapid growth was aided by the fashionable interest in English institutions among the French educated classes. A Grand Lodge was founded in Paris some time in the 1730s, which in 1773 became known as the Grand Orient de France.

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[1] The general backround information has been taken from standard works on the subject such as R.F. Gould's *History of Freemasonry* (4 vols., reprinted London/Chicago, 1968), Ferdinand Runkel's *Geschichte der Freimaurerei in Deutschland* (3 vols., Berlin, 1931-2), Ludwig Abafi's *Geschichte der Freimaurerei in Osterreich-Ungarn* (5 vols., Budapest 1890ff.), the *Internationales Freimaurer-Lexikon* compiled by Eugen Lennhoff and Oskar Posner (Vienna, 1932; reprinted Munich, Amalthea-Verlag, 1980) and John Hamill's *The Craft* (Wellingborough, Crucible, 1986). I have also made use of J.M. Roberts's outline of the early history and diffusion of masonry in his study *The Mythology of the Secret Societies* (London, Secker and Warburg, 1972).

No sooner had Masonry established itself in France than it began to exhibit a new development, in which chivalric themes and mystical tendencies were prominent and which ran counter to the egalitarian spirit and style of craft masonry. This highlighted a contradiction which had been inherent in Masonry from the start and which is a highly important factor in its history. On the one hand Masonry promoted the doctrine that all men are brothers, united by a common devotion to a "Great Architect of the Universe" in defiance of religious dogmatism and sectarianism. On the other hand it taught that there is an ancient wisdom, handed down by initiates and embodied in secret rites and symbols and accessible only to those who have reached the appropriate grade. Depending on which of these aspects one chose to emphasize, Masonry could lead either towards a programme of egalitarianism, toleration and democratic political reform, or towards the view that the only worthwhile enterprise was the search for the pearls of wisdom and virtue embedded in an ancient gnosis that lay out of reach of the profane. This dichotomy in Masonry was both a strength and a weakness: a strength because it meant that Masonry could appeal to a wide spectrum of opinion; a weakness because the two approaches were bound to come into conflict. The relationship between this conflict and the struggle between the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment is a complex one which will be explored in due course.

The development of chivalric Masonry in France was much influenced by a Scottish émigré named Andrew Michael Ramsay who, in 1737, published a speech in which he claimed that Masonry had its origins in the Crusades, a claim which led other imaginative minds to believe that the Craft had been founded or transmitted by the Templars. Ramsay was also one of those who encouraged the idea that Scotland had preserved a uniquely authentic masonic tradition. Thus, alongside the Templar legend there developed in France the phenomenon of "Scottish" masonry, a term that came to refer to all the chivalric and mystically-oriented rites beyond the craft degrees. These rites also came to be referred to as "red" Masonry, while the craft degrees were known as "blue" Masonry. The blue lodges were also referred to as St. John's lodges. The chivalric grades or "grades of vengeance" were based on an elaboration of the story of Hiram Abiff's death in defence of the master mason's word, which forms the basis of the third degree ceremony. The mythology of the chivalric degrees involved the notion of specially chosen masters (*maîtres élus*) who were sent out by King Solomon to kill the assassins or bring them back for punishment.

Interacting and to some extent overlapping with this red masonry was a variety of esoteric and mystical currents represented by such figures as Martines de Pasqually, founder of an order called the Elect Cohens (Elus Coëns) which flourished in the 1760s and early 70s, and his disciples Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (1743-1803), known as "le Philosophe Inconnu". Much in-

fluenced by the 16th/17th-century German mystic Jacob Boehme, Saint-Martin taught that the ideal society was a theocracy, governed by men chosen by God. His most influential work was *Des Erreurs et de la Vérité*, first published in 1775, which was read throughout Europe. A German translation by Matthias Claudius appeared in 1782. This work evinces a dualistic outlook reminiscent of Gnosticism, which we shall encounter repeatedly. He begins with a classic statement of the pessimistic epistemological position: man is foolish to think that he can, by his own faculties, light the torch that will guide him through the darkness that surrounds him. Saint-Martin goes on to speak of the eternal struggle between the principles of good and evil, and of physical existence as process of continual suffering.[2] Humankind languishes in ignorance and misery, cut off from "the one source of light and the only aid for living beings".[3] He decries the materialists whose system "reduces human beings to a lower level than the beasts",[4] and he says that a theocratic monarchy is the only way of bringing into the temporal realm "the functions of a true and infinite Being".[5]

Although Saint-Martin himself never founded an order, the followers of his ideas grouped themselves into an influential movement known as Martinism. Another of Pasqually's former disciples, Jean-Baptiste Willermoz (1730-1824), went on to found a high-degree masonic order called the Chevaliers Bienfaisants de la Cité Sainte, also known as the Rite Ecossais Rectifié. He also founded in 1763, a rite with alchemical and Rosicrucian themes, the Chevaliers de l'Aigle Noir et Rose-Croix. Another figure who was influential in this world was the Swedish philosopher, scientist and visionary, Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), propounder of a highly idiosyncratic and occult form of Christianity which attached itself to certain branches of Masonry. Equally colourful and more notorious was the Sicilian Alexander, Count Cagliostro, alias Joseph Balsamo (1743-1795), founder of a so-called Egyptian Rite of Freemasonry, who travelled all over Europe gathering devotees among the rich and noble by claiming miraculous powers as an occultist and initiate. Although he came to an inglorious end in a papal prison in Rome, he left behind an enduring legend. Yet another denizen of this curious world was Dom Antoine-Joseph Pernety (1716-1796), a former Benedictine monk who founded an order called the Illuminés d'Avignon with a strongly alchemical theme. This whole amalgam of occultism and high-degree Masonry is often referred to as "Illuminism" (not to be confused with the system of Adam Weis-

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2 Un Ph[ilosophe] Inc[onnu] [L.C. de Saint-Martin], *Des Erreurs et de la Vérité* (Edinbourg, i.e. Lyon, 1782 edition), pp. 1-31.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 287.

haupt's Illuminati, which, as we shall see, was the very antithesis of French Illuminism). To the extent that it was masonic, it could also be called "theosophical Masonry".[6]

To say that these *illuminés* (a word that they often applied to themselves) constituted a Counter-Enlightenment influence would be an over-simplification. Saint-Martin's work *Des Erreurs et de la Vérité* found itself on the Vatican's Index of Forbidden Books, alongside such Enlightenment works as Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*, and Pernety fell foul of papal authority in Avignon and took refuge for a time at the court of the "enlightened despot" Frederick the Great in Berlin. In France, as in Germany, theosophical tendencies can be seen as a "third current", often as much at odds with orthodoxy as with the Enlightenment.

Although France led the way in the development of the higher masonic degrees, Germany soon developed an even more luxuriant crop of exotic masonic and para-masonic rites alongside the basic craft degrees. The first recorded foundation of a German lodge took place in Hamburg under English influence in 1737. This later became the English Provincial Grand Lodge for Hamburg and Lower Saxony. Another lodge was founded at Braunschweig in 1744 and another at Hanover in 1746. After that, lodge after lodge appeared until the craft had spread over most of the German-speaking world. An important early initiate was Francis, Duke of Lorraine, later husband of Maria Theresa and Holy Roman Emperor, who was received into Masonry at the Hague in 1731.[7] Another was the Crown Prince of Prussia, later Frederick the Great, who was initiated in Hanover in 1738.[8] His initiation and subsequent patronage of Masonry stimulated its growth in Prussia and elsewhere.

Whereas in England the Grand Lodge in London, despite a period of schism, gave a cohesiveness to British Masonry, in Germany there was no single central masonic authority, and this enabled many different varieties of Masonry to emerge. One system, which for a time dominated German Masonry, was the Strict Observance, founded in the 1760s by Karl Gotthelf, Baron Hund (1722-1776), which emphasized the Templar derivation of Masonry. A rival to this was the Clerks Templar, founded by Johann August Starck (1741-1816), who claimed that it was the clerks rather than the knights of the Templar order who were the real guardians of its secrets.

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[6] The information given in this and the previous two paragraphs, apart from direct quotations from Saint-Martin, has been culled from the following works: René Le Forestier, *La Franc-Maconnerie templière et occultiste au 18e et 19e siècles* (Paris, Aubier, 1970), and J.M. Roberts, *Op. cit.* above.

[7] Ludwig Hammermayer, introduction to *Beförderer der Aufklärung in Mittel- und Osteuropa*, edited by Eva H. Balázs, Ludwig Hammermayer, Hans Wagner and Jerzy Wojtowicz (Berlin, Ulrich Camen, 1979), p. 8.

[8] *Ibid.*

By the third quarter of the 18th century there were a number of different masonic authorities operating in Germany, all of which operated the three basic craft degrees but diverged when it came to the higher degrees. There were English Provincial Grand Lodges at Hamburg and Frankfurt, which confined themselves to the craft degrees. In Berlin there was the lodge Zu den drei Weltkugeln (a Grand Lodge from 1744), which adopted the Strict Observance and was later to become an important nerve centre of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. Another Berlin grand lodge, the Grosse Landesloge (founded in 1770), worked the multi-degree Swedish system, which had been developed in Sweden under the inspiration of French chivalric masonry and had then penetrated into Germany. Unlike English craft Masonry, which promoted a generalized concept of the deity and an inclusive attitude to different religious faiths, the Swedish system was fervently Christian in its symbolism and admissions policy. To make matters even more complicated there was another group of lodges practising French high-degree Masonry. The best known of these was the lodge Royal York de l'Amitié in Berlin, which did not become a Grant Lodge until 1798. The subsidiaries of the grand lodges were not confined to any one particular area but were spread throughout the German-speaking realm. The Three Globes, for example, had subsidiaries in many parts of Germany and Austria, and it was not until 1784 that Austria had its own Grand Lodge.[9] In addition to the lodges owing allegiance to one or other of the grand lodges, there were a number of unaffiliated lodges known as *Winkellogen*.

It would be useful at this stage to introduce some statistics about membership figures and geographical distribution, bearing in mind that it is necessary to be cautious in quoting such statistics, as authorities on the subject differ. The following table, taken from Michael Voges' *Aufklärung und Geheimnis*,[10] relates to the number of lodges founded at different periods. The first column shows the time span, the second indicates the total number of foundations and the third shows the proportion of these that took place south of the river Main, but not including the Habsburg lands.

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[9] Helmut Reinalter, "Die Freimaurerei zwischen Josephinismus und frühfranzeischer Reaktion", in *Freimaurer und Geheimbünde*, edited by Helmut Reinalter (Frankfurt-am-Main, Suhrkamp, 1983), p. 47.

[10] The statistical information given here has been taken from Michael Voges, *Aufklärung und Geheimnis* (Tübingen, Max Niemeyer, 1987), pp. 64 ff.

	Number of lodges founded	*Number founded in south*
1737-1750	58	4
1751-1760	40	4
1761-1770	117	10
1771-1780	148	18
1781-1790	82	27
1791-1800	45	4
	490	67

One noticeable feature of this table is the marked increase in foundations of lodges that begins in 1761, that is towards the end of the Seven Years' War, when French officers and prisoners of war in Germany were acting as important transmitters of French high-degree systems. High-degree Masonry was evidently capable of attracting recruits at a faster rate than English craft Masonry. Another fact that emerges from the table is the markedly lower number of lodges founded in the predominantly Catholic south, only 13.6 per cent of the total over the whole period. The table also reveals an overall decline in the number of lodges founded during the last two decades of the 18th century. The corresponding rise in the number of *Lesegesellschaften* (reading societies) during this period suggests a disenchantment with Masonry in favour of the *Lesegesellschaften* or alternatively the use of the latter as a substitute at a time when Masonry was being increasingly harassed.[11]

It is also possible to arrive at an approximate notion of the number of freemasons in Germany. J.A. Starck, in his *Ueber die Alten und Neuen Mysterien* (Berlin, 1782), estimated the number of masons in Germany to have been 20,000, though it is not clear what his definition of "Germany" was.[12] This is not far off the number given by Winfried Dotzauer in his article "Sozialstruktur der Freimaurer in Deutschland". Dotzauer estimates that the German-speaking realm (excluding Switzerland and Austria) in the years 1778-1784 had at the most 27,000 freemasons.[13]

The two strains in Masonry that I have referred to became associated in Germany with different political standpoints. On the one hand, the egalitarian, universalist strain was closely linked with the *Aufklärung*. Frederick the Great was a mason, as were many of the leading *Aufklärung* intellectuals. Prominent examples include Christoph Friedrich Nicolai and the great dramatist Gott-

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[11] *Ibid.*, p. 65.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

[13] Gerhard Steiner, *Freimaurer und Rosenkreuzer* (Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1985; Weinheim, Acta Humaniora, VCH, 1985), p. 126.

hold Ephraim Lessing, whose masonic ideals are set out in his *Ernst und Falk: Gespräche für Freimaurer* and whose play *Nathan der Weise* is a plea for the kind of religious toleration that one type of Masonry wished to encourage. The picture is similar in Austria, especially under Joseph II. Although Joseph himself was not a mason, many leading court bureaucrats as well as musicians and writers were members of the Craft. Examples included Haydn, Mozart, Ignaz von Born, the model for Sarastro in Mozart's *Magic Flute*, Aloys Blumauer, poet and Imperial censor, and Joseph von Sonnenfels, the great legal reformer. The lodges that these men attended were places of forward-looking political, philosophical and scientific debate.[14] The radical wing of Masonry and para-Masonry at its most extreme was represented by the order created by Adam Weishaupt, the Illuminati (not to be confused with the French *illuminés*), which will be looked at more closely in due course.

In contrast to this type of Masonry there was the theosophical, mystical type with its emphasis on hierarchy, secret gnosis and elaborate rituals. These two kinds of Masonry were in practice not mutually exclusive as regards their membership. Not being immune to the normal human inconsistencies of impulse, many Masons were attracted by the universalist, egalitarian ideas of traditional craft Masonry yet at the same time wanted to enjoy the mystique of theosophical Masonry and the sensation of being privy to a carefully guarded gnosis. An example of someone who straddled the boundary between the two modes was Adolf Freiherr von Knigge, who considered joining a Rosicrucian lodge but then joined the Illuminati and became Weishaupt's chief collaborator. He always, however, retained an interest in the arcane and mysterious, in contrast to Weishaupt's rationalistic outlook.[15] By the same token there were people within theosophical Masonry who retained *Aufklärung* sympathies, as we shall observe. Thus, although the history of German Masonry in the second half of the 18th century is one of increasing polarization between these two modes as the masonic movement became more and more bound up with political, religious and social controversies, there remained a tension within the theosophical camp that made its political stance not always unanimous.

With an understanding of the complex jigsaw puzzle that constitutes German 18th-century Freemasonry, it will now be possible to examine how Rosicrucianism became a part of the jigsaw and how it fitted into the picture.

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[14] Reinalter (see note 9), pp. 40-41.

[15] J.M. Roberts, *The Mythology of the Secret Societies*, p. 125. For Knigge's life, see also: Marino Freschi, *Dall'occultismo alla politica, L'Itinerario illuministico di Knigge (1752-1796)* (Naples, Aion, 1979); and Knigge's own memoirs, *Philo's Endliche Erklärung und Antwort* (Hanover, Schmidt, 1788).

As we have seen, the name Gold- und Rosenkreuz, or variations of it, had been appearing in various texts since 1710, in ways that suggested, without actually proving, the existence of some kind of brotherhood of that name. This is what I have called the pre-masonic phase of the Rosicrucian revival, as distinct from the very tangible order that came to flourish later on, with its masonic connections and rituals of masonic character.

When and how this latter phase began is still a matter of speculation. According to Arnold Marx,[16] the available evidence regarding its inception seems to point to one Hermann Fictuld, author of a number of alchemical and magical-kabbalistic works, including *Aureum Vellus* (Leipzig, 1749), in which he twice refers to a "Societät der goldenen Rosenkreuzer", who were the inheritors of the Golden Fleece.

Antoine Faivre, in an essay entitled "*Miles redivivus*", sees Fictuld as part of an 18th-century wave of nostalgia for the age of chivalry, which manifested itself in such works as Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* (1774). He writes:

> We find, firmly entrenched in the midst of the century of Enlightenment, the image of the knight. What was it doing there? And to what needs was it responding? At the moment when the *Encyclopaedia* was beginning to be published, when the *Aufklärung* was celebrating its first great triumphs, this image stood out in contrast to arid rationalism ... diversifying itself and taking on a new garb. Hence the name *miles redivivus* which I venture to use in following the figure of the knight up to around 1815, though the three domains in which he chose to manifest himself: alchemical literature, Freemasonry and literature in general (novels, drama, epic poems). This applies to Europe as a whole, but especially to Germany, which from the Renaissance to our own time, has remained, more than any other country, the conservator of symbolic and initiatory traditions.[17]

The Order of the Golden Fleece was a Chivalric order, founded by Duke Philip III of Burgundy in 1429. Fictuld, however, claims that the original fleece was made by Phrixus, son of the king of Thebes, and was passed down via Jason to Duke Philip. Fictuld's interpretation of the order is alchemical. The word *Vliess*, he says, is cognate with *fließen*, meaning "to flow", and the Golden Fleece is therefore a symbol for the philosophical gold, a liquid fiery substance, which flows down from the planetary spheres and constitutes the divine soul permeating the world and giving rise to all life and growth. The Golden Fleece, according to Fictuld, was therefore essentially an alchemical order, which, after the death of Philip's successor, Charles the Bold, went underground and eventually became the order of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz.

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[16] Arnold Marx, *Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* (Zeulenroda/Leipzig, das Freimaurer-Museum, 1930).

[17] Antoine Faivre, *Accès de l'esotérisme occidental* (Paris, Gallimard, 1986), p. 208.

Fictuld's preface to *Aureum Vellus* is interesting, since it shows him to be out of sympathy with his age. He writes that the old ways, statutes and ceremonies are far more sensible and natural than those of his own day, for they have as their basis "the veneration and fear of God, the law of love and justice, freedom, and the protection and upholding of rights." He continues:

> *In summa* the old laws and ceremonies represent the veneration of God and the welfare of humankind. All these statutes, however, are to the world of today merely an old, unknown fashion. They are no longer loved or respected but have been replaced by quite new ones that serve no other purpose than ostentation and arrogance. Thus there is also no longer any fear of God in the land, for the world makes do with shells and husks instead of with the kernel.[18]

Although little is known about Fictuld himself, one significant recorded fact is that he corresponded with the famous Pietist writer F.C. Oetinger,[19] so here again is a link, albeit a tenuous one, between Pietism and the Rosicrucian-alchemical tradition. It is perhaps not too far-fetched to suggest a possible parallel between, on the one hand, Fictuld's search for a pristine chivalric order and, on the other, Pietism's search for a pristine Christianity. Possibly the omission of chivalric titles from the grades of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz arose from a desire to avoid the empty pomposity which Fictuld laments in the ceremonial practices of his own day.

To what extent Fictuld was responsible for creating the Gold- und Rosenkreuz order, as it was in the second half of the 18th century, is a matter of speculation. Marx writes: "Probably Fictuld came into contact with the brotherhood, which up to that point had worked entirely in secret, in about the year 1747, giving it for the first time a definite organization, if not actually creating a new fraternity under the old name."[20]

The earliest solid evidence regarding this new fraternity is a document, dated 1761, discovered in Hungary by the masonic historian Ludwig Abafi (alias Aigner) in the archives of the Festetics family, which he described in an article in *Die Bauhütte* of 18 March 1893.[21] This document, the work of a member of the "Prager Assemblée" (evidently a local branch of the order), was entitled *Aureum Vellus seu Iunioratus Fratrum Rosae Crucis* and contained rituals of the order as well as a list of members. The leaders, and possibly also the founders, of this order are listed by Abafi as follows. The *Oberster Vorsteher* (supreme head) was one von Schwartz, a merchant of Frank-

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[18] Hermann Fictuld, *Aureum Vellus* (Leipzig, Michael Blochbergrer, 1749), p. 143.

[19] Faivre, *Accès de l'esoterisme occidental*, p. 211, note 1.

[20] Marx, *Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, p. 16.

[21] Ludwig Abafi-Aigner, "Die Entstehung der neuen Rosenkreuzer", in *Die Bauhütte*, Jahrgang 36, No.11, 18 March 1893 (Frankfurt-am-Main), pp. 81-5.

furt-am-Main. The remaining leaders were: von Rieβ of Darmstadt (no occupation given); von Stiller, an artillery captain of Frankfurt-am-Main; the brothers Pasmabier, money-changers of Frankfurt-am-Main; Rudolf Baron Nitzky, Polish lieutenant-colonel, resident at Munich; and Johann Georg Baron Nitzky. The second Nitzky, Abafi believes, was also the local leader of the Prague "Assemblée".[22]

The account in this manuscript of the order's founding was taken almost word for word from Fictuld's *Aureum Vellus*, while the statutes of the order set out in the manuscript correspond almost exactly to those of a French order called the Philosophes Inconnus, as described in Baron Henry de Tschoudy's *L'Etoile Flamboyante* (this appeared in French in 1766 and in German in 1779 and therefore could not have been the source of the Prague statutes; both must have stemmed from a common source).

What do we know of the nature of the Rosicrucian order during this phase? The Prague document reveals some significant differences from the earlier phase. First, the order was now more emphatically hierarchical than it was presented in the pre-masonic phase. Whereas Frisau's order, for example, has simply 77 members and an Imperator, this order had seven grades of membership. From the bottom up, these were as follows: Neophytes (*jüngst Aufgenommene*), Juniores, Adepti exempti, Philosophi minores, Philosophi majores, Philosophi majores primarii, and Magi. Secondly, the order had evidently greatly expanded in size. The Magi alone were now said to number 77.[23]

There are also doctrinal differences revealed in the statutes. What is interesting is that these statutes were not based on those of Sincerus Renatus, which are distinctly different from Tschoudy's, although there are points of similarity. It is rather surprising that this Prague organization should have taken its rules from a French source when the obvious source would have been the set of statutes that appear in Sincerus Renatus, the "Testamentum" and elsewhere.

When we examine the substance of the statutes we find that, as in the case of the "Testamentum", they are by no means always contrary to the Enlightenment spirit. The first article sets a cosmopolitan tone. Tschoudy's version reads:

> This company should not be bounded by one country, nation, kingdom or province or, in a word, by any particular place; but it should be spread throughout the whole inhabitable world illuminated by a holy religion, where virtue is known and reason followed: for a universal good should not be confined to a small, enclosed

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[22] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 82. The reference given by Abafi for the manuscript in question is Degh LXI.1. See "A Note on Sources" for information about the Degh collection.

> place but, on the contrary, should be carried wherever it encounters people suitable to receive it.[24]

The corresponding article in the Prague document is as follows: "Members can be masons from all lands and nations; for the universal Good knows no boundaries but must benefit those who are worthy of it wherever it finds them."[25] Interestingly, the second version, unlike the first, says that members must be masons. Otherwise the sentiment is the same.

Article 4 in Tschoudy states that people of all conditions and religions can be admitted,[26] whereas the author of the Prague document, evidently misreading the French states: "All members of a company [i.e. a division of the order] must be of one and the same condition, profession and religion." This must be a mis-translation, as he goes on to say that they must "at least" be convinced Christians—the phrase "at least" does not make sense if the first sentence is correct. He goes on, however, to say that an exception can sometimes be made for Jews "on account of respect for the ancient Jewish law".[27] This rule was changed in the later manifestations of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, and Jews were prohibited, although, as we shall see, they were admitted in to the Rosicrucian off-shoot called the Asiatic Brethren.

In so far as the statutes reveal a religious standpoint, it is, curiously enough, a Catholic one. Whereas the original manifestos had been decidedly anti-papal in tone, and Sincerus Renatus's order had been marked by confessional tolerance, the Prague statutes state, in article 14, that, before being received, a candidate must have a mass celebrated.[28] This again is a mis-translation or deliberate modification of the equivalent article in Tschoudy, which says that the candidate should "invoke the light of the Eternal by causing to be celebrated a solemn and religious public ceremony in a consecrated place ... according to the religion of the person who is to be received."[29]

At the same time, article 5 of both documents states that members of religious orders can only be admitted with difficulty.[30] This corresponds to a similar article in Sincerus Renatus. Both documents also agree, in article 6, in saying that kings and princes can seldom be admitted[31]—a stipulation which runs strikingly counter to the theocratic notions of much Counter-Enlightenment thought and which was to be ignored in later versions of the order. The

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[24] Henri Tschoudy, *L'Etoile flamboyante* (no place of publication given, 1766), pp. 195-6.
[25] Abafi-Aigner, "Die Entstehung der neuen Rosenkreuzer", p. 82.
[26] Tschoudy, *L'Etoile flamboyante*, p. 198.
[27] Abafi-Aigner, "Die Entstehung der neuen Rosenkreuzer", p. 82.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 83.
[29] Tschoudy, *L'Etoile flamboyante*, p. 211.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 201 and Abafi-Aigner, "Die Entstehung der neuen Rosenkreuzer", p. 82.
[31] Tschoudy, *L'Etoile flamboyante*, pp. 202-3, and Abafi-Aigner, "Die Entstehung der neuen Rosenkreuzer", p. 82.

two documents also concur, in articles 21-23 in enjoining members to practise alchemy.[32]

Arnold Marx points out that, as the order was supposed to be reformed every ten years, and as such reforms took place in 1767 and 1777, it can be assumed that 1757 was the true date for the founding of the order.[33] For convenience, I shall call this phase of the order the 1757-67 phase.

A crucial feature of this phase is that the order was now linked with Freemasonry. The Prague circle bore the masonic lodge name Zur schwarzen Rose, and its members included some people who belonged to the Prague masonic lodge Zu den drei gekrönten Sternen.[34] With an anti-masonic policy developing under Maria Theresa's rule, the circle was dissolved in 1761, and three of its members were sentenced to six years in prison.[35] This was a foretaste of two general decrees banning Freemasonry in the Habsburg lands. The first was issued in 1764, presumably as a delayed enforcement of the 1751 papal bull against Masonry (the second of two such bulls, the first having been issued in 1738). From this time, until the death of Maria Theresa in 1780, lodges in those territories were obliged to work in secret.[36]

Marx points out that initially Prague, Regensburg and Frankfurt-am-Main were the centres of the neo-Rosicrucian movement. Later the movement spread to Silesia—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say "returned", since the whole revival had begun in Silesia with the publication of Sincerus Renatus's book. Silesia, with its tradition of mystical piety, may have played a pivotal role in the neo-Rosicrucian movement and will be referred to again (Chapter 7). Subsequently the movement gained a strong foothold in Vienna and also spread to Saxony, Hungary, Russia and Poland.[37] Berlin also became an important Rosicrucian centre. Thus, interestingly, the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, in the direction of its dispersal, followed approximately the opposite pattern to that of Freemasonry in general and that of the *Aufklärung* itself, both of which tended to spread from north to south.

In the 1760s and 70s one of the most conspicuous apologists for the order was a certain Friedrich Joseph Wilhelm Schröder (1733-1778), a professor of medicine at Marburg. Santing gives the following account of Schröder's Rosi-

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32 Tschoudy, *L'Etoile flamboyante*, pp. 220-23, and Abafi-Aigner, "Die Entstehung der neuen Rosenkreuzer", p. 83.

33 Marx, *Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, p. 17.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

35 Abafi-Aigner, "Die Entstehung der neuen Rosenkreuzer", p. 85.

36 Helmut Reinalter, "Die Freimaurerei zwischen Josephinismus und frühfranzeischer Reaktion", in *Freimaurer und Geheimbünde*, edited by Helmut Reinalter (Frankfurt-am-Main, Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch, 1986), p. 39.

37 Marx, *Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, pp. 34-5.

crucian activities.[38] In 1766 he was giving himself out as a Rosicrucian (without yet being a member of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz) and initiating Freemasons who so desired into Rosicrucianism. As a keen devotee of alchemy, he carried on a wide correspondence with other alchemists. As a result a plan was evidently formed by the order to recruit him. At first he received anonymous letters of cryptic content in order to arouse his curiosity, then he was visited by an adept of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz who told him that he had been selected for the great work. He became director of a Rosicrucian circle but after a time apparently fell foul of the order, for he suddenly ceased to receive replies to his communications to his superiors. That Schröder came to be regarded with suspicion by the Gold- und Rosenkreuz is confirmed by a letter from G.C. von Röpert (whom we shall meet again shortly), dated 19 October 1785 and reproduced in I.A. Feβler's *Kritische Geschichte der Freimaurerei*. Röpert refers to a certain "Brother von Waldenfels, currently Minister at Cologne" who had been "of the sect of the blessed Schröder of Marburg". Röpert states that he too had been a member of this sect but had found that Schröder also had "a connection in France which seemed to me to be suspicious and hindered me from giving credence to his assertions before I had verified them with my own eyes".[39] How long Schröder remained in the Gold- und Rosenkreuz is not known, but, whether in or out of the order, he remained an active publicist for alchemy and in the years 1772-74 brought out a work entitled *Nueue alchymistische Bibliothek*, a collection of alchemical writings whose intention was to keep alchemy alive in the face of the threat from Enlightenment science. This book became one of the most widely read sources on alchemy during the last quarter of the 18th century. The second part of the book contained a contribution from "W. Schott. T.R. und Br. des G.R.C. in Deutschland" (Scottish Knight Templar and Brother of the Golden and Rosy Cross in Germany). In the copy of this work in the library of the Grand Lodge of the Netherlands the name Waldenfels with a question mark is written in pencil beside the "W".

Another, somewhat notorious, figure associated with the early Rosicrucian revival was Johann Georg Schrepfer (1739-1774), a former Prussian hussar turned coffee house proprietor in Leipzig where he was active in masonic circles and carried out spiritualistic seances. Like Cagliostro, with whom he has been compared, he had a penchant for inventing grandiose occult credentials for himself and an ability to make people believe in them.[40] The anti-masonic edicts of 1764 and 1766 had little long-term effect in the Habsburg lands and, as Marx points out, Vienna soon became once again an important base for

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[38] A.W. Santing, *Die Historische Rosenkruizers* [1-12] (Amersfoort, Bouwsteenen, 1930-32; reprinted Amsterdam, W.N. Schors, 1977), pp. 218-9.

[39] Quoted by Santing, p. 219.

[40] Lennhoff and Posner, *Internationales Freimaurer-Lexikon*, pp. 1415-6.

the Rosicrucians. In 1767 the first recorded reform of the order took place. A document from this period reveals that it now had nine grades. In ascending order, these were: Junior, Theoreticus, Practicus, Philosophus, Adeptus Minor, Adeptus Major, Adeptus exemptus, Magister, Magus. The document in question lists each of these grades with its number of members, badge, colour, password, kabbalistic name of its leader, country where they are found, residence of the leader, place of assembly, number of circles (i.e. the number of the grade in the hierarchy), the science studied by the members, and the cost of admission. The entry for the grade of Junior reads as follows:

> Erster Grad, Junior. Anzahl, 909. Zeichen, ein Ring mit Charakteren. Farbe, Gold. Wort, Aesch. Name d. V., Pereclinus de Faustis. Land, sie sind überall zerstreut. Residenz der Vorsteher, zu Inspruk. Ort der Zusammenkunft, unbestimmt; sie werden alle zwei Jahre versammelt. Kreise, sie haben derer neune. Wissenschaft, sie sind Lehrlinge. Aufnahmekosten, drei Mark Gold.[41]

The same document gives the impression that the order was very widespread. The places of residences of the grade leaders allegedly include, besides Innsbruck: Zürich, Dresden, Prag, Vienna, Naples, Venice, Madrid, London and Amsterdam. And the places of assembly include: Leipzig, Breslau, Krakow, Königsberg, Danzig, Hamburg, Lisbon, Malta and Smyrna. It is fairly clear, however, that the details of the grades were intended more to impress prospective members than to represent the true state of affairs. The members of the ninth grade, for example, are presented as being superhuman: " ... from them nothing is concealed. They are masters of everything, like Moses, Aaron, Hermes and Hiram Abiff."[42]

Marx points out that, in the order's new form, the theme of a chivalric inheritance was excluded from the legend "and the Bible became the sole guiding principle".[43] At the same time, however, the order continued to claim possession of a wisdom tradition going back to ancient Egypt.

The years following the 1767 reform were years when many different tendencies were vying for possession of the soul of German Freemasonry and when many self-appointed sages were heard proclaiming the validity of this or that rite. In 1775, 26 German nobles gathered for a masonic congress in Braunschweig, the last one at which the Strict Observance enjoyed its full

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[41] I.A. Feβler and F.L. Schröder (ed.), *Rosenkreuzerey* (no date or place of publication given, but Wolfstieg's *Bibliographie der Freimaurerei*, entry 42544, indicates Rudolstadt, *circa* 1805-6), one of a series of pamphlets on different rites, privately published by Freidrich Ludwig Schröder, a prominent German freemason, pp. 82-3.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

[43] Marx, *Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, p. 35.

prestige before its collapse in 1782. In the year following the Braunschweig congress leading German members of the Strict Observance gathered at Wiesbaden at the invitation of one Baron von Gugomos, who gave himself out as the "emissary of the true Superiors of the Order". He claimed that these Superiors had their headquarters at Nicosia in Cyprus and said that he was ready to go to Cyprus and obtain secret writings from them.[44] Much excitement was caused by this. During or soon after the Wiesbaden congress, however, Gugomos was exposed as being a charlatan whose titles and charters were a fabrication. From this point on, according to Marx, confidence in the prevailing high-degree masonic systems (that is to say, those based on the Templar legend) began to collapse, leaving the way open for the Gold- und Rosenkreuz and the Illuminati, the former representing the Christian and mystical path, the latter the radical and enlightened path.[45]

In 1777, following the ten-year pattern, the Gold- und Rosenkreuz once again underwent a reform. The descriptions of the grades were now more cautiously worded. For example, in the 1767 grade list it was claimed that members of the seventh grade "have knowledge of the stone of the wise, the Kabbalah and natural magic", whereas in 1777 this was modified to read: "Some, it is true, also have knowledge of the stone of the wise, Kabbalah and natural magic, but they are destined for a very different task and hitherto have not discovered everything with regard to projection."[46] Evidently more sophisticated minds were now behind the order, minds that knew how to appeal to the yearning for higher knowledge, without promising too explicitly to deliver it. A certain sophistication was also required to create the elaborate series of rituals that went with the grades. Whether these changed substantially in 1777 is not known since none survive from before that date. They will be described in greater detail later on.

The identities of the people behind this renewed order remain a matter of some speculation, but certain clues do exist. Johannes Schultze, in his essay *Die Rosenkreuzer und Friedrich Wilhelm II*, states that "the origin of this new Rosicrucian order is to be sought in the Berlin circle of Duke Friedrich August of Braunschweig [1740-1805]". Certainly Berlin was a major centre of high-degree Masonry. Before the Gugomos affair there had been high expectations of the promised Templar dispensation—expectations which appear to have concentrated around the figure of the Duke. Bischoffswerder (see Chapter 7), for example, wrote to Friedrich August expressing the hope of accompanying

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[44] Johannes Schultze, "Die Rosenkreuzer und Friedrich Wilhelm II.", in *Forschungen zur brandenburgischen und preußischen Geschichte* (Berlin, de Gruyter, 1964), pp. 241-2.

[45] Marx, *Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, p. 30.

[46] The table is attached as an appendix to Berhard Beyer, *Das Lehrsystem der Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* (Leipzig/Berlin, Pansophie-Verlag, 1925; Leipzig, das Freimaurer-Museum, 1925).

Gugomos to Cyprus and "lifting the veil which conceals our happiness from us". Another would-be Templar, von Lestwitz, as a delegate to the Wiesbaden congress, spoke of the role of the Duke in the following words:

> Prophetically, I can see Your Grace, invested with the sacred unction, standing in the Holy of Holies, with the forces of nature obeying you and the whole assembly of brothers, who are subject to the best of monarchs, gathering under your banner to receive from you the highest commands of the order, to follow your illustrious example of religiosity and virtue, and, united with you, to work with tireless efforts for the happiness of the world. ...[47]

All this was, as Schultze points out, very contrary to the spirit of the *Aufklärung*. Here, as the reign of the enlightened despot Frederick the Great drew to a close, was a group of men hoping to find some ancient esoteric order to which they could ally themselves and looking for a leader who would be a combination of monarch, sage and hierophant. Although Lestwitz saw Duke Friedrich August as such a leader, these hopes were soon to focus on the heir to the Prussian throne, as we shall see in due course.

After the exposure of Gugomos the Berlin circle of Friedrich August became increasingly desperate in their search for the true "Superiors". Thus at the beginning of 1777 Wöllner wrote to Bischoffswerder: "Oh, you Brothers who are able to see, will you not have pity on us blind men who stand in the road and beg?"[48] It was at this point, whether by coincidence or not, that the 1777 reform of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz order took place. By 1779 the members of the Friedrich August circle in Berlin—the Duke himself, Wöllner, Bischoffswerder and others—were professing themselves to be Rosicrucians. Others, such as Johann August Starck, founder of the Clerks Templar, were not pleased by the growth of the Rosicrucian order. On 24 October 1779 Starck wrote to one von Röpert (see below, Chapter 4) complaining: "In Silesia knights are appearing whose chief is said to reside in Sulzbach. Elsewhere a new system is being created which the Prince of Prussia is already said to have joined and which gives us a different bible instead of the hitherto sacred Scripture."[49] Starck clearly knew very little about the order or he would have been aware of its highly Christian emphasis.

What, therefore, had happened in the year or two immediately following Wiesbaden? It seems likely that after the exposure of Gugomos the Berlin seekers established a link with the Rosicrucians of southern Germany and accepted their version of the true masonic tradition. In this process Wöllner appears to have played a key role as an intermediary between the Berlin group

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[47] Schultze, "Die Rosenkreuzer und Friedrich Wilhelm II", p. 243.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 244.
[49] *Der Signatstern*, Vol. 3 (Berlin, 1804), p. 299.

and the "Superiors" in the south. As to the identity of these superiors, there are some clues in Wöllner's *Nachlaβ*, as Schultze points out. In one of his last instructions, Wöllner communicated to his successor as head of the Order in Berlin, namely Duke Friedrich August, the names of these Superiors, written on three envelopes, one inside the other. The innermost envelope, which bore (in German) the words "To the most worthy Brother Geronni", was enclosed in a second envelope addressed "To the most worthy Brother Effarius", and this in turn was placed in a third envelope addressed (in French) "To Mr. Untersteiner, distinguished merchant, Augsburg". Schultze explains:

> In fact there was living in Augsburg around 1770 a merchant named Johann Georg Untersteiner from Rovereto near Trent. Thus the trail of the mysterious Superiors leads to South Germany and Austria and possibly to Italy. However, behind Untersteiner in Augsburg stands the figure of the cloth merchant and Circle Director Franz Xaver Arbauer, who also attained prominence in the order as its Secretary and had contact with the order's circle in Bozen. Behind him, according to Aigner (Ludwig Aigner, alias Abafi), stood a triumvirate consisting of Schleiβ von Löwenfeld, physician-in-ordinary from the Upper Palatinate, the legation secretary Karl Rudolf Ignaz von Keller in Regensburg, who was particularly active in Austria, and Christian Erdmann Franz Xaver von Jägern in the neighbourhood of Regensburg. The last-named is identified by Aigner as the "Prior of the Grand Priory", Geronni, the last addressee.[50]

It would appear, therefore, that when Wöllner wished to communicate with the Grand Prior, who presumably was the supreme head of the order, he did so by enclosing the message in the way described above as a precaution in maintaining the secrecy of the Prior's identity.

Marx's list of the leading triumvirate is the same as that given by Schultze. He adds that Keller was "perhaps an Austrian; at any rate he was already active in 1764 as a Rosicrucian in Prague and Vienna. After the prohibition there he worked in Regensburg and succeeded in reorganizing the order in Austria after it had been discredited by the first set of Superiors." And von Jägern he describes as "an authority on alchemy who was also active in Regensburg".[51] Schleiβ von Löwenfeld we shall encounter again shortly. As we shall see, in his writings he made distinctly anti-*Aufklärung* pronouncements on a number of issues.

As for Keller, some interesting remarks about him and about the Rosicrucians in general are given in the correspondence of Friedrich Tieman (1743-1802) whom Antoine Faivre, in an article on Tieman, describes as "a typical

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[50] Schultze, "Die Rosenkreuzer und Friedrich Wilhelm II", p. 248.
[51] Marx, *Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, pp. 34-5.

example of the world-view of symbolic Freemasonry in the latter part of the 18th century".[52] Tieman, the son of a pastor, was a man of mystical temperament. Like so many people who moved in the world of Illuminism and high-degree Masonry, he was profoundly anti-Enlightenment in his views, as is revealed by a letter from him to another counter-Enlightenment figure, the Zürich pastor Johann Caspar Lavater, in which he describes how, at an earlier stage in his life he "following only the light of nature, failed to see the light that has come into the world and, being blinded by the conclusions of the seductive new philosophy, took it for a foolish superstition. ..."[53] Tieman was on friendly terms with French *illuminés* such as Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin and Jean-Baptiste Willermoz, and it was to the latter that he wrote in 1781 the following remarks about the Rosicrucians:

> The Rosicrucians are, at the present moment, certainly the secret society in Germany that most merits attention. They are difficult to find and to know; for those who adopt the name merely because they wish to win proselytes, and of whom many parts of Germany are inundated, are merely bastard children not recognized by their fathers. The true Rosicrucians have false brothers, especially at Munich, who have published libellous accusations against them [the true Rosicrucians], making them appear cunning deceivers whose plan is to appropriate the light permeating higher Masonry and the other secret societies.

Tieman explains that he entertained the same conception of the Rosicrucians until he happened to meet one of the true members of the brotherhood, "Monsieur Keller of Regensburg", an "illuminated man" who gave him a different conception of the order. Tieman continues:

> I subsequently learned that he is one of their superiors and that he enjoys the greatest esteem in the order. After several interesting conversations with him he led me to hope that I might become a member, but in order to join a circle it would first be necessary for me to have a fixed residence somewhere. I have since seen some very estimable and very illuminated ones at Vienna.[54]

The order was now in its maturity, and the neo-Rosicrucianism that it represented contained the following main ingredients:

1. The original Rosicrucian tradition stemming from the manifestos, albeit markedly altered.
2. A new emphasis on alchemy.
3. An austere kind of Christian piety.

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[52] Antoine Faivre, "Friedrich Tieman und seine deutschen und russischen Freunde", in *Beförderer der Aufklärung in Mittel- und Ost-Europa*, edited by Eva H. Balázs, Ludwig Hammermayer, Hans Wagner and Jerzy Wojtowicz (Berlin, Ulrich Camen, 1979), p. 292.

[53] *Ibid.*

[54] *Ibid.*, pp. 294-5.

4. Freemasonry in general and the French and Swedish high-degree systems in particular, with their colourful grades, but now shorn of the chivalric mythology—possibly, as I have speculated, in deference to the pietistic element.

It may have been this curious combination of austere Christianity with an elaborate system of ritual and symbolism that helped the order to flourish in both Catholic and Protestant areas.

At this stage, where we see the Gold- und Rosenkreuz in its maturity, it is appropriate to attempt a numerical estimate of the strength of the Rosicrucian revival in Germany. We can divide those involved into three groups: first, the members of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz itself; second, rival groups and self-appointed Rosicrucian sages and their followers; third, people not actively involved in any Rosicrucian group but interested in Rosicrucianism, perhaps because they were practitioners of alchemy or through the considerable published literature on the subject.

As a starting point let us take an estimate from someone writing as a member of the order. Chrysophiron, in a passage that I shall quote later on (see below, chapter 5), says that he could name well over a hundred true Rosicrucians in his own district and that there are more than a thousand in the whole of "the German fatherland". We can also approach the question by considering the number of places that were Rosicrucian centres. In the various manuscripts I have examined relating to the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, and in previous writings on the subject by scholars such as Marx, Beyer, Santing, Frick and Steiner, mention is made of at least the following places as being the homes of Gold- und Rosenkreuz groups: Aachen, Augsburg, Berlin, Bozen, Braunschweig, Breslau, Brunn, Burghausen, Chemnitz, Dresden, Frankfurt am Main, Hamburg, Hanover, Hildesheim, Kessel, Königsberg, Leipzig, Marburg, Prague, Regensburg, Munich, Salzburg, Sulzbach, Nuremberg, Augsburg, Stuttgart, Vienna. Even this very rough and undoubtedly incomplete list, leaving out the centres in Hungary, Poland and Russia, gives 27 centres. Given that each circle always had nine members, and assuming there was only one circle in each of these places, this would give a minimum of 243 members. But there must have been many other towns where the order was active, and many would have had more than one circle. Wöllner, as Oberhauptdirektor for his region, is reported to have been in charge of 26 circles, indicating a membership of 234 in that part of Germany alone;[55] and according to Abafi the Regensburg centre had 120 circles under its aegis, making 1,080 members.[56] Thus Chrysophiron's estimate of well over 1,000 members begins to look

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[55] Paul Bailleu, entry on Wöllner in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, Vol. XLIV (1898), p. 151.

[56] Abafi, "Die Entstehung der neuen Rosenkreuzer", p.85.

plausible. In 1785 J.E. Biester, writing in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* (see Chapter 8), estimated the number at 8,000, but this has the ring of exaggeration.

As for the second group, those whom Tieman calls the "false brothers", it is impossible to estimate their number, but it must have been substantial if he was able to say that certain parts of Germany were "inundated" by them. It is equally difficult to estimate the extent of the third group, those interested in Rosicrucianism in a less active way, whose interest might have been aroused by reading or through contact with alchemy, but Wolfstieg's bibliography reveals that between 1710 and the end of the century 60 books on the subject of Rosicrucianism were published in German. In addition Rosicrucianism was discussed in the press and had its echoes in literature, as for example in Goethe's unfinished poem *Die Geheimnisse.*

It was largely the Gold- und Rosenkreuz order and its polemicists that kept the Rosicrucian issue alive. Furthermore, as we shall see, many of its members were highly-placed men who gave the order an influence out of proportion to its numerical strength.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE WORLD OF THE INITIATE

We are now in a position to take a closer look at the Gold- und Rosenkreuz order in its maturity, to identify some of its members and to describe its hierarchical structure, rituals and teaching. The picture that emerges is of a widespread organization, secretive and hierarchically structured, whose Weltanschauung and ethos are philosophically and religiously at odds with those of the *Aufklärung* but whose individual members, in their social background, political stance and general outlook, often resist the anti-*Aufklärung* label.

Among the documents relating to the order that are part of the Kloβ collection, housed in the library of the Grand Lodge of the Netherlands at the Hague, is a correspondence between two men named von Maltzahn and von Röpert.[1] Röpert writes from from Trollenhagen, Maltzahn from his estate in Mecklenburg (the Maltzahns [also spelt Maltzan], according to the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, were a distinguished family that had been settled in the Mecklenburg area since the Middle Ages). The correspondence begins on 2 November 1782, with Maltzahn writing to Röpert as a fellow freemason whom he also knows to be a Rosicrucian. He says that he has been a mason for 20 years and has become convinced that without a special master and guide who stands on a higher step of the "great Temple of Nature", one is not in a position to attain to the highest grade of wisdom and the most perfect happiness. He continues: "Indeed you yourself, most Worshipful Master, express this most clearly in your writings when you say that no one would regret ... addressing himself to you and seeking communion with you and the Order of the Rosicrucians." He goes on to request that the order honour him with membership, then gives the following details about himself: "I am now living on my estates between Neu Brandenburg and Neu Strelitz in Mecklenburg and am married to the eldest daughter of Baron von Luchner in the happiness and contentment which a considerable income makes possible."

On 28 November Röpert replies that he is able to convey "the pleasant news that your reception ... can perhaps be accomplished soon". Then he adds a piece of sermonizing, reminding Maltzahn that, through the unhappy fall of Adam, the image of God and the whole perfection invested in Adam were lost, and that the highest Creator, in his gentle mercy, so cared for his unhappy

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[1] Library of the Grand Lodge of the Netherlands, Kloβ collection 1198 XVII 193.A.9. Individual folios of these letters are not numbered.

creatures that he himself wishes directly to show them here on earth the way to re-attain their lost happiness and even in the flesh to understand what otherwise appears to be reserved for eternity. Here we see another example of the gnostic type of Christianity which is repeatedly evident in the writings emanating from the order.

On 7 December Röpert writes again giving further information about the order, preparatory to Maltzahn's admission. The aim of the order, he says, is to help the individual to restore in himself the image of the Creator which, through various transgressions and sins, has become darkened and distorted. On account of the difficulties involved in this task, the order subjects candidates to the strictest tests of their worthiness. Röpert emphasizes the need for a candidate to make strenuous efforts at self-improvement. Because this is very hard for someone corrupted by education, prejudice and habit, the candidate must be all the more earnest in his endeavours. A candidate who strives vigorously, however, can count on the combined prayers of the order to come to his aid.

If this united prayer is heard and is effective, the result will soon be apparent. The conduct that a junior brother displays before God resembles a barometer indicating his inner state. ... Nevertheless, the order does not allow itself to be deceived, and it continues to regard such a junior brother as unworthy until such time as he can count himself among those who have been reborn through the baptism of the Spirit [durch des Geistes Taufe wiedergeboren].

He goes on to say that, because the order knows how difficult are the tasks involved, it demands of every brother a total and unqualified trust [ein völliges und uneingeschränktes Vertrauen], the most rigorous conformity to its ordinances and the most punctilious obedience. In particular three injunctions are emphasized. First, the brother must "constantly pray in the name of Jesus, for evil is constantly striving to take the place of good". Second, he must strive towards understanding himself. Third, he must identify his own weaknesses, lust and pride being the most common ones that the Devil uses to lead us astray.

Once again we see here a pietistic element (rebirth in the Holy Spirit through one's own earnest endeavours) combined in a curious way with the rigidly regimented and hierarchical world of high-degree Masonry. Much of this is emphatically contrary to the spirit of the *Aufklärung*, at least to the Kantian version of it. Whereas Kant, as we have seen, defined *Aufklärung* as man's liberation from his "self-imposed tutelage", the person who joined the Gold- und Rosenkreuz voluntarily submitted himself to a strict form of tutelage. And, instead of relying on his own understanding, as Kant urged, he placed his faith in revelation handed down from the upper echelons of the

order. Also the excessive emphasis on original sin and man's inherent corruption (to the point of gnostic dualism) goes against the *Aufklärung* outlook.

On 15 December Röpert writes again to Maltzahn telling him that the final arrangements have been made for his admission to the first grade and urging him to be mindful of the importance of the step he is taking. On a practical note, he is to bring 3 ducats, being the sum that had to be given in alms by the candidate. He reminds Maltzahn again that it is the order's intention that he shall become "reborn" [*ein Wiedergeborener*]. A token of this rebirth was that every initiate received a special name when he entered the order. In Maltzahn's case it was Mezentius, while Röpert was known as Orthosophus. In subsequent letters to each other, these are the names by which the two men sign themselves. Such ceremonial names often took the form of an anagram or variation of the real name—e.g. Mezentius—while in other cases the name was chosen for its meaning—e.g. Orthosophus (which combined the words for "correct" and "wise").

On Christmas Day 1782, soon after his initiation, Maltzahn received a letter from Röpert telling him various rules of conduct and etiquette regarding the order. He was always to keep it a careful secret that he was a Rosicrucian, and if he wished to write to somebody concerning a matter relating to the order he was to communicate with "no one except me, your immediate superior and leader".

An item in the correspondence that is of particular relevance to the theme of this study is the official circular from the "Vice Generalats Secretariat" of the order, which was sent to Maltzahn on 17 March 1783. This circular was an attack on the Illuminati, who by then were seen by the order as a dangerous threat. This theme will be returned to later. The circular is significant as it shows how the order could use its authority to promote conservative policies.

The Kloβ archive yields little material relating to Maltzahn's membership of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz after 1784, but it does contain a letter from Maltzahn to to Röpert, dated 30 August 1804, which sounds a note of finality:

> In this package, my true and esteemed friend, you will find everything that I possess concerning our association. I am now approaching my 70th year, and, although I am in full health, Providence could summon me precipitately. As I have not belonged to the Order for several years and do not know whether perhaps I have incurred the Order's displeasure, I thought it would be for the best if I entrusted everything to your faithful brotherly hands, for in Austrian lands I would be running a risk in having these papers with me, and in Warsaw where I live. ... I have no connection with the brethren, who work only up to the third degree. Should the Order give me a sign of its approval I would recognize it with obedient and thankful heart.

The writer, who still signs himself with his order name of Mezentius, clearly retains a feeling of loyalty towards the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, even after he has ceased to be a member.

Quite different is the case of the scientist Georg Forster (1754-1794), who was for a time a highly active member of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, but later became intensely hostile towards it. Forster's progress from one position to the other is charted by the East German scholar Gerhard Steiner in his *Freimaurer und Rosenkreuzer: Georg Forsters Weg durch die Geheimbünde*.[2] What makes Forster's involvement with the Gold- und Rosenkreuz particularly interesting is that, even when he was an active member of the order, he never ceased to be a man whose sympathies lay with the Enlightenment.

Forster was born in Danzig in 1754, the son of a pastor, Johann Reinhold Forster, and was destined to lead a colourful and roving life. In 1766 the Forsters settled in England where J.R. Forster became active in masonic circles. In the years 1772-5 both father and son accompanied Captain James Cook on his second voyage around the world, an experience which gave ample scope to Georg Forster's passion for natural history. In the autumn of 1774 the young Forster sojourned in Paris, where he joined the masonic lodge of Les Neuf Soeurs, a centre of Enlightenment thought, which was founded by the astronomer Lalande and whose members included the philosophers d'Alembert and Condorcet, and the then American ambassador Benjamin Franklin. Forster's radical sympathies were to remain with him, and in 1793 he was to be one of the leaders of the republican government set up in Mainz under the French occupation.

In 1778 Forster returned to Germany where he settled in Kassel as a professor of natural history at the prestigious Carolinum academy and joined the local masonic lodge Zum gekrönten Löwen, which was affiliated to the Strict Observance. In the same year he also joined the Kassel circle of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. The spectacle of someone of Forster's *Aufklärung* mentality joining a brotherhood whose world-view clashed with so many of the tenets of the *Aufklärung* is not as contradictory as it might appear. As has already been pointed out in Chapter 3, there are other examples, such as Baron Knigge, of men who were attracted both to the aims of the *Aufklärung* and to the arcane world of Rosicrucianism and theosophical masonry. In Forster's case it may have been the promise of alchemical knowledge that drew him into the Gold- und Rosenkreuz for a time—although later he became profoundly disenchanted with the order (see Chapter 8).

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2 Gerhard Steiner, *Freimaurer und Rosenkreuzer: Georg Forsters Weg durch die Geheimbünde* (Akademie-Verlag, Berlin, DDR, 1985; Weinheim, Acta Humaniora / VCH Verlag, 1985).

Whatever the motives, Forster was duly initiated into the order, whose teachings were conveyed to him in a sort of catechism which, along with other documents relating to his involvement with the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, has been preserved in the Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Marburg. I rely on Steiner's summary of these documents and his quotations from them.[3] The catechism consists of 35 questions divided into three classes. The first ten deal with general conceptions of human perfection and happiness, matters of social intercourse and the importance of the arts, sciences and commerce. The second set of questions begins by stating that the duties of the order are divided into the service of God and the service of one's fellow human beings and asking the initiate to say which of the two alternatives he holds to be better for himself. There follows a series of questions on the meaning and practice of true virtue and its distinction from false Christianity. The third set begins with the following question:

> What would be the best way and means of increasing the power and happiness of the poor and oppressed good people of this world and of restoring fallen Christianity, in a word, the best way of bringing true happiness and perfection to the true and the good in this temporal realm?

There follow questions such as: Can genuine alchemy also provide a means to this end? Why is it so difficult to propagate gold? And how would you set about finding it? What is the cause of the ruination and near extinction of Christianity? What is the cause of false Christianity, and what is to be done about it? What is the spirit of God in man, and how does one become aware of it? What is your opinion of the liturgy of the Church or, more particularly, of the outer liturgy?

Steiner goes on to quote a document in the same archive containing the statutes of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. As these represent the essence of the order, it is worth quoting them in some detail. These too are divided into three groups. The first, dealing with the aims and organization of the order in general, begins:

> The aim of this sacred Order, newly erected in this troubled time and well pleasing to God, is none other than that which the ancient godly Order of godly men has had since the beginning of the world. And our Order is none other than the renewal of the ancient secret Order which, under so many names and in so many forms, has always existed in the world, and in our time is continued, through God's support and protection, under the name [Gold- und Rosenkreuz]. The ultimate goal is, in a word, the improvement of piety and of the hidden knowledge of natural things which, like piety, has fallen into decay at the present time. ...

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3 Steiner, pp. 65ff.

The statutes go on to state that not all men are worthy to partake of the secrets of the order. No one can be a Rosicrucian unless he is an upright Christian and unless he is humble, earnest, zealous in the pursuit of religion, polite and courteous towards all human beings and highly discreet. No one under the age of 30 can be admitted to the order, except by permission of the Superiors. Excluded are the self-seeking, the spiritually conceited, those who speak frivolously of religious matters, learned people who flatter themselves on their cleverness, and all "chemists" who have a foolish conception of the Philosophers' Stone and the transmutation of metals. At every meeting each brother must submit a sheet of paper listing all his moral transgressions committed since the last meeting, and he must bear freely and without complaint any punishments that are inflicted upon him, usually in the form of tasks or abasing penances. Furthermore, in order to prove his self-discipline and to punish his own weakness, each new member must voluntarily give up something of which he is especially fond. Those of high station in life must learn to be humble and to serve, the lustful must abandon lustfulness, and the rich and privileged must give up their riches and privileges until they are worthy of them. In this way each brother will learn to be free of the "animal and mundane nature to which we cling" and to be united with God.

The second section of the statutes deals with more practical matters, such as how the brethren should dress (respectably but not ostentatiously), the duty of the order to care for widows and orphans of brethren and the need for avoidance of quarrelling among the members. The third section deals with procedural matters. It is stated that for a meeting three members are the minimum and twelve the maximum (not nine as one would expect from the fact that circles were supposed to be limited to nine members). Meetings take place in the evening and last for four hours. They are free of charge. No member can be absent without giving adequate reason. At fraternal dinners soft music can be played in a neighbouring room to heighten the refinement of the occasion. A candidate for initiation receives some preliminary instruction and is tested three times. If he passes he must read the statutes and swear his assent, signing and sealing the oath. He is then ready for admission, for which there is no charge.

Forster's fellow members of the Rosicrucian circle at Kassel included some that he had already known in the lodge Zum gekrönten Löwen. Steiner lists the members, apart from Forster himself, as follows:[4]

(1) Dieterich Christoph Ihringk, *Oberappelationsrat*.
(2) Samuel Thomas Sömmering, Professor of Anatomy at Kassel and a close friend of Forster.

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[4] Steiner, pp. 77-8.

(3) Jakob Karl Sigmund Fulda, *geheimer Rat*.
(4) Johann Wilhelm Alexander von Baumbach, *Regierungsrat*.
(5) Johann Philipp Franz von Fleckenbühl, government minister, President of the Court of Appeal and Curator of the Carolinum academy.
(6) Friedrich Wilhelm, Freiherr von Canitz und Dallwitz, *Hofmarschall*.
(7) George [sic] Manger, pastor.
(8) Johann Christian Follenius (no occupation given).

In addition there were four extraordinary members:

(1) Prince Karl Wilhelm of Nassau-Usingen.
(2) Prince Georg Karl of Hessen-Darmstadt [1749-1823], whom Steiner describes as "one of the most corrupt adventurers among noble freemasons of the 18th century". He had left army service in 1775 to devote himself entirely to Freemasonry and in 1778 had become involved in various masonic systems in an attempt, according to Steiner, to raise money in order to extricate himself from financial difficulties.
(3) Konrad Friedrich von der Malsburg, Geheimrat of Hanau and later envoy and government minister of Hessen-Kassel.
(4) A certain von Haak (his Christian names are not recorded), legal *Geheimrat*.

The extraordinary members were probably more or less honorary, as they do not appear in the minutes of lodge, discovered by Steiner in the Merseburg branch of the DDR state archives, but in view of the strictness of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz's admission policy, they must have been in some sense *bona fide* Rosicrucians. Out of the whole list of 12 members (including the extraordinary ones), a quarter were aristocrats, and half held administrative or government positions.

Social categorization is, however, in the absence of fuller and more detailed statistics, a doubtful basis on which to label the Gold- und Rosenkreuz as anti-*Aufklärung* or otherwise. An examination of the membership in other areas reveals that the make-up of Rosicrucian circles and lodges of Rosicrucian orientation in fact covered a wide social spectrum, as will be shown. Nor is Forster the only example of a Rosicrucian who also had *Aufklärung* sympathies.

In Vienna, where the Gold- und Rosenkreuz was active from the early 1770s, the lodges of Rosicrucian tendency encompassed men of varying social backgrounds.[5] One of these was the lodge Zur Beständigkeit, which is thought to have emerged in about the early 1780s out of an earlier lodge called Zu den sieben Himmeln. Members of the former included Hans Heinrich von Ecker und Eckhoffen, a Gold- und Rosenkreuz member who became disenchanted

5 Eva Huber, "Zur Sozialstruktur der Wiener Logen im Josephinischen Jahrzehnt", in *Aufklärung und Geheimgesellschaften*, edited by Helmut Reinalter (Munich, Oldenbourg, 1989), p. 174.

with the order and founded the rival Asiatic Brethren (see Chapter 10).[6] Under its new name the lodge continued to have strong Rosicrucian tendencies. One of its most prominent members was Max Joseph Freiherr von Linden, a former Austrian government official who was the author of a number of works on chemistry and chemical technology as well as being a keen student of alchemy.[7] For a time Linden was a zealous member of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, but by 1784 had become thoroughly disillusioned with the order, as he revealed in a conversation with Georg Forster (see Chapter 8). Another leading member was one Föderl, also a Rosicrucian.[8] The Rosicrucian/alchemical tenor of the lodge is suggested by its badge, which depicts masonic objects encircled by an ourobouros, the tail-biting serpent so often found in hermetic symbolism.[9] In 1782 this lodge had 44 members, of whom only 13 (29.5 per cent) were aristocrats, and these were mostly from the lower nobility. The largest contingent was made up of civil servants, with army officers, merchants, manufacturers and clergy also strongly represented.[10]

Another lodge with a strong Rosicrucian presence was the lodge Zur gekrönten Hoffnung, which also contained members of the Asiatic Brethren. One of its leading members until 1785 was Count Johann Baptist Karl von Dietrichstein, leader of the Vienna Rosicrucians.[11] Another was Bernhard Samuel Matolay de Zsolna, Imperial Councillor at the Hungarian Chancellery in Vienna, a man of mystical tendencies who was master of the lodge in 1783.[12] Matolay was also a Rosicrucian.[13] Of the 111 members of the lodge in 1780, 65 (58.5 per cent) were nobles, a considerably higher proportion than in the lodge Zur Beständigkeit. As regards professional categories, 35 per cent belonged to the military and about 16 per cent to officialdom.[14]

A very different balance of membership characterized the lodge Zum Palmbaum, which broke off in 1783 from the lodge Zu den drei Adlern und zum Palmbaum, probably because of its Rosicrucian tendencies.[15] Its master at the time of the secession, Loibel, was a prominent Rosicrucian. In this lodge

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6 *Ibid.*,p. 180.

7 Ludwig Abafi, *Geschichte der Freimaurerei in Oesterreich-Ungarn* (Budapest, 1890-99), Vol. IV, pp. 318-9.

8 Huber, p. 180. Huber notes that Vols. 70 and 51 of the Degh archive confirm that Linden and Föderl were Rosicrucians.

9 Abafi, Vol. IV, p. 321.

10 Huber, p. 180.

11 *Ibid.*, note 9, citing Degh archive, Vol. 70.

12 Lennhoff and Posner, *Internationales Freimaurer-Lexikon*, p. 1011.

13 Huber, p. 175, note 10, citing Vol. 70 of Degh archive.

14 Huber, p. 170.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 177.

the nobility were only weakly represented, the largest group being officials, followed by people from trade and manufacture.[16]

It is interesting to compare the membership profile of these Rosicrucian-oriented lodges with that of the lodge Zur wahren Eintracht, which was an *Aufklärung* stronghold and contained many members of the radical Illuminati. Between 1782 and 1785 the membership of this lodge rose from 41 to 175. The nobility accounted for 40 per cent, with 15 per cent belonging to the high nobility. The breakdown by professions was roughly as follows: officials, 20 per cent; military, 20 per cent; teachers and university professors, 12 per cent, clergy, 8 per cent.[17] The aristocratic element in this lodge was thus larger than, for example, in the Rosicrucian-oriented Zur Beständigkeit. Furthermore, membership statistics for the Illuminati as a whole reveal that, of those definitely established as members, 35.52 per cent were nobles.[18] It is difficult, therefore, to determine the alignment of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz vis-à-vis the *Aufklärung* by trying to fit it into this or that social category.

A further illustration of the difficulties that arise in trying to classify the Gold- und Rosenkreuz as anti-*Aufklärung* is provided by the case of the Rosicrucians in Moravia, which Dr. Jiri Kroupa deals with in his study of Moravian Freemasonry, Alchymie Stesti.[19] There the lodge Zur aufgehenden Sonne im Orient in Brünn (Brno), headed by Count (later Prince) Karl Josef von Salm-Reifferscheidt, underwent a split when Salm's rival, Count Franz Josef Kolowrat-Liebsteinsky, broke away at the beginning of 1783 to found the lodge Zu den wahren vereinigten Freunden. While the splinter lodge was dominated by members of the Illuminati, Salm's lodge was a stronghold of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. Although the latter was dissolved in 1785 following Joseph II's *Freimaurerpatent*, Salm continued to run a Gold- und Rosenkreuz circle from his castle at Rájec near Brünn until 1793. Salm, however, presents us with another example of someone who had a foot in both the Rosicrucian and the *Aufklärung* camps. He was an admirer of the early Enlightenment and had translated Montesquieu's work on the greatness and decline of the Romans. His library abounded with the works of *philosophes* such as d'Alembert and Helvétius but also with theosophical writings. His castle was the scene both of philosophical discourse and of spiritualistic seances and alchemical experiments. He and his circle did much to spread religious tolerance in the region.[20]

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[16] *Ibid.* Unfortunately in this case Huber does not give exact figures.

[17] Huber, p. 179.

[18] T.C.W. Blanning, "The Enlightenment in Catholic Germany", in *The Enlightenment in a National Context*, edited by Roy Porter and Mikulás Teich (Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 125.

[19] Jiri Kroupa, *Alchymie Stesti* (Brno, Muzeum Kromerizska / Muzejni a Vlastivedna Spolecnost, 1987).

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 287-8.

In response to an enquiry, Dr. Kroupa provided the following comments on Salm and his circle:

> The Gold- und Rosenkreuz cannot simply be categorized as being anti-*Aufklärung*. I think the Brno example illustrates this well. Not only was Prince Karl of Salm-Reifferscheidt in possession of an enlightened library, but his son's tutor, Dr. Johann Blaha—also a Rosenkreuzer—later sympathised with the French Revolution. Prince Salm supported the French civilisation model, but his son's (Count Hugo Salm's) scientific aspiration started with the alchemy of the Rosenkreuzer and was influenced by the industrial boom in England. In his work we may trace the beginnings of the nineteenth-century *Frühliberalismus* in Moravia...
>
> The Salm Rosicrucian circle [included] ... Dr. Johann Blaha, Johann Georg Götz (an iron-processing specialist), maybe Dr. Franz Weisbach (a chemist). The high aristocracy was represented by Count Franz Anton Monte l'Abbate, Count Franz Karl Chorinsky and others.[21]

Dr. Kroupa adds that he thinks the activities of the Rosicrucians in Moravia were primarily concerned with alchemy and natural sciences rather than with political matters (although Salm himself was a member of the "Gubernium" in Moravia), while the Moravian Illuminati were involved in philanthropy and humanism. Both societies, he believes, played a part in the institutionalizing of science in Moravia at a time when the University was controlled by Catholic clergy and there was no scientific academy.[22]

This illustrates again a considerable degree of overlap between the world of the Rosicrucian initiate and the world of the *Aufklärer*. And in this case both factions evidently militated against the Catholic monopoly in education by helping to institutionalize science.

We can now turn to the ceremonies that were an essential part of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz's workings. Some of these are printed in *Rosenkreuzerey*, one of a series of pamphlets on different rites published in 1805-6 by Friedrich Ludwig Schroeder, a prominent German freemason.[23] The following account of the initiation ritual to the grade of Theoreticus is based on the description given in this work.

The candidate for initiation is conducted into a room where he is dressed in the apparel of a Scottish Master (an intermediate degree between the craft

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21 Letter to the author from Dr. Kroupa, 12 March 1989.

22 *Ibid.*

23 I.A. Fessler and F.L. Schröder (ed.), Rosenkreuzerey (see Ch.3, note 41). This ritual is also described by Bernhard Beyer in *Das Lehrsystem der Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* (see note 34), who bases his account on two manuscripts which he found in the Bayreuther Freimaurer-Museum: "Rituale und Gesetze des theoretischen Grades der Salomonischen Wissenschaft" and "Fr. R. & A.C. Concordanzmässige Constitutiones der drey ersten Classen derer Juniorum Theoreticum Praticorum" (both manuscripts were evidently siezed during the Third Reich). Another source for the ritual is the printed work *Die theoretischen Brüder* (see Chapter 8, note 9). Although they vary somewhat in focus, these accounts agree on essential features.

degrees and the higher grades). He then knocks at the door of an adjacent room where he is welcomed by a brother with the words: "Heartfelt greetings three times three, dear Brother!" This brother examines the candidate in the Scottish sign, grip and word, and gives him the "the usual fourfold kiss". After this the candidate purifies himself symbolically by washing his hands before knocking at the door of the innermost sanctum, to which he is admitted accompanied by the brother who has just examined him.

The room which he now enters is closed to all daylight and illuminated by candles. At the far end is a square table covered with a black cloth on which lies an open bible and beside it the statutes, register and Director's instructions as well as a black-edged apron and a ceremonial jewel. Behind the table sits the Director with two other officials at black-covered tables to his right and left. In front of the main table is spread out a carpet woven with symbolic figures and with three lighted candles placed around the edge.

The candidate is led forward by the accompanying brother. On the table immediately in front of him stands a seven-branched candlestick containing lighted candles. The Director looks at him silently for a few moments; then the following catechism takes place:

Director: What grade in Freemasonry have you reached?
Candidate: I am a Scottish Master.
Director: What more do you ask for?
Candidate: To receive higher knowledge.
Director: Answer my questions sincerely and honestly. Have you fulfilled the duties of a Scottish Master?
Candidate: Yes.
Director: Have you improved your mind and will through the practice of virtue and the avoidance of vice?
Candidate: Yes.
Director: What is the beginning of wisdom?
The fear of God.

The candidate is then asked to state what conception he has of God and how he is disposed towards his fellow men. Having received satisfactory answers to these questions, the Director then declares:

> Very well, brotherly love demands that we grant you your request. If it pleases God, your patience, trouble and work will be rewarded with success. Here, however, you must lay aside your superfluous fineries, thereby remembering that on your first reception as a mason you were divested of all metals, which signifies in moral terms the laying aside of the Old Adam and the striving towards the ways of God-fearing men.

The candidate then lays aside his hat, sword, coat and the other trappings of a Scottish Master. The Director leaves his seat, approaches the candidate and removes the latter's shoes. As he does so he says: "Dear Brother, learn through

my action to recognise that humility reigns with us also." He returns to his place and says: "My Brother, step on to the globe that is shown on the carpet."

The image of the globe on to which the candidate now steps is surrounded by two circles. From the outermost circle emanates a series of rays ending in a ring of clouds in which appear the signs of the seven planets: the Sun and Moon in full splendour, then the glyphs for Mercury, Saturn, Mars, Venus and Jupiter, each glyph surrounded by two triangles interlaced. Above the symbol for Mars is a cubic stone and below it a rough, unhewn stone. Opposite Saturn is a circle divided by a perpendicular line and opposite Venus one cut by a horizontal line. Between the Sun and Moon, and facing the candidate as he stands in the middle, is a flaming star, flanked by the compasses and set square.

At the order of the Director, the Secretary reads the opening of the Gospel of St. John ("In the beginning was the Word" etc.), after which the Director asks the candidate if he believes in the manifestation of the Word. Having replied in the affirmative, the candidate is asked to put his finger on the Gospel and repeat the following oath:

> I ... swear freely and with due deliberation to worship as long as I live the eternal and almighty Jehovah in spirit and in truth and to strive as far as possible to recognize his power and wisdom through nature; to renounce the vanities of the world; and, as far as it lies in my power, to provide for my brothers, to love them, to stand by them in their needs in both word and action; and finally to maintain an unbreakable silence. As truly as God is eternal.

All the brothers then say together: "To thee alone, O Jehovah, be honour! Thou art the beginning, the middle and the end, for thou livest from eternity to eternity, Amen."

The candidate returns to his former place, and the secretary puts on his shoes again for him. He is then led to the Director who puts the apron and jewel of the grade on him and reveals to him the sign and grip of the grade and its word, which is "Chaos".

The Director then explains the significance of the symbols on the carpet. The planets, he points out, were created as instruments for the four elemental powers to send their influence to the earth and to bring about the creation of the seven metals. The flaming star represents nature, the breath of God, the universal and central fire which enlivens, sustains and destroys all things. The two circles divided perpendicularly and horizontally signify respectively the active or male and the passive or female principles in the universe. The unhewn stone is the base matter of the philosophers. The square and compasses signify proportion, weight and mass in nature. The three candles represent the lights of reason, nature and revelation. The four corners of the carpet symbolize the four elements. The seven-branched candlestick stands for the seven gifts of wisdom which every brother must ask from God. The globe in the

middle denotes the true lodge of the philosophers and three kingdoms of nature which they seek to understand. This explanation concludes the main part of the proceedings, and after various formalities the lodge is closed.

The alchemical interpretation of the symbolism woven into the carpet is characteristic of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. Even conventional masonic symbols, such as the unhewn stone or "rough ashlar", are here translated alchemically, emphasizing the notion that the true secrets of Masonry are learned only when one has passed beyond the three craft degrees to Rosicrucianism, the true culmination of Masonry. The significance given to the three candles is interesting because it suggests that the order did not reject reason as such, but merely insisted that it should always be accompanied by revelation and the correct reading of nature.

Similarly elaborate rituals accompanied the other grades, and with each grade further alchemical knowledge was imparted. Furthermore each grade had its own cipher system, which was communicated upon initiation.[24] Only members of the first four grades could work together in one circle, apart from the Circle Director.[25]

Apart from the grade system, there was a hierarchy of offices within the circle, as there is in any masonic lodge. Offices in addition to the Circle Director included "Senior" (evidently a sort of deputy Director), Secretary and Treasurer. Beyond the circle there was a further hierarchy of command. How this worked is difficult to establish precisely, but Marx surmises that several circles were governed by a *Kreisdirektor*, while an even larger area would be governed by an *Oberhauptdirektor*. Above that there were further authorities, whose existence is hazy. There are references to a "Gross-Priorat", a "Vize-Generalat" and, at the very top, "die höchsten Oberen" (the highest Superiors).[26] Strict precautions were taken to preserve the secrecy that divided the upper echelons of this hierarchy from the lower ones. For example, all communications from above were supposed to be sent back immediately.[27]

The strong element of pietistic Christianity in the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, which has already been observed, emerges again in a document reproduced by Johann Joachim Bode in his *Starke Erweise*. According to this document the order has, as its aims, *inter alia*, "to rescue from the claws of Satan the human souls so dearly redeemed by Jesus Christ", and:

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[24] Steiner, p. 83.

[25] Marx, *Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* (Zeulenroda/Leipzig, Das Freimaurer-Museum, 1929), p. 44.

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 41-3.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

> "Through the Brotherhood of the Supreme Shepherd Jesus, invisibly dispersed throughout the whole world, to gather together a church and establish a community which will be splendid and which, as in Ephesians V.27, will have neither blemish nor wrinkle, but which will be holy and unimpeachable."[28]

This echoes the pietistic notion of the "Invisible" or "Inner Church", which will be encountered again in the writings of men such as Karl von Eckartshausen (see Chapter 9). Although it was a concept that could inspire people of all confessions, it was also one that could be threatening to orthodoxy.

When we examine the overall philosophy of the order we find, as Arnold Marx correctly observes, that it has strongly gnostic character.[29] *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* defines Gnosticism as a religious movement which, in its Christian form, came into prominence in the seconnd century and had the following features:

> Characteristic of Gnostic teaching was the distinction between the Demiurge or 'creator god' and the supreme remote and unknowable Divine Being. From the latter the Demiurge was derived by a longer or shorter series of emanations or 'aeons'. He it was who, through some mischance or fall among the higher aeons, was the immediate source of creation and ruled the world, which was therefore imperfect and antagonistic to what was truly spiritual. But into the constitution of some men there had entered a seed or spark of divine spiritual substance, and through 'gnosis' and the rites associated with it this spiritual substance might be rescued from its evil material environment and assured of a return to its home in the Divine Being. ... The function of Christ was to come as the emissary of the supreme God, bringing 'gnosis'.[30]

Although it does not lie within the scope of this study to prove a direct connection between the teachings of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz and this early Christian Gnosticism, the parallels between the two are so close that it makes sense to apply the word "gnostic" in its broad sense to the doctrines of the order. Here, for example, is how one document describes the aims of the brotherhood:

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[28] Anon. (J.J.C. Bode), *Starke Erweise aus den eigenen Schriften des hochheiligen Ordens Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* ("Rom, 5555", i.e. Leipzig, Göschen, 1788), pp. 24-5. The document in question is *"Eingang zur ersten Classe des preisswürdigsten Ordens vom Goldenen RosenKreutze ... erlassen im Jahre des Herrn 1777"*. In the original German the two quotations referred to by this note read as follows:

(1) die durch Jesum Christum theuer erkauften Seelen der Menschen aus den Klauen des Satans zu retten.

(2) Durch die in der ganzen Welt unsichtbar ausgebreitete Verbrüderung dem Erzhirten Jesu eine Kirche zu sammeln, und eine Gemeinde zu bereiten, die herrlich sey, die nach Eph. 5. v.27. nicht habe einen Fleck, oder Runzel, oder des etwas, sondern daß sie heilig sey und unstraflich.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

[30] *Op. cit.*, edited by F.L. Cross (London, Oxford University Press, 1957; reprint, 1958), pp. 564-5.

> ...to make effective the hidden forces of nature, to release nature's light which has become deeply buried beneath the dross from the curse, and thereby to light within every worthy brother a torch by whose bright light he will be able better to perceive the invisible God ... and thus become more closely united with the original source of light.[31]

A specific parallel can be seen in the gnostic attitude to sexuality and procreation, which was, in the classic Gnosticism, a negative one.[32] Similarly, in the document already quoted, we find reference to "the foolish drive of human beings to procreate or rather to satisfy their impure carnal desires", which is "even for the reborn often the hardest thing to withstand, however ugly and debasing it may be for the dignity of man and for his future exaltation in heaven."[33] Although this did not prevent members of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz from marrying and having children, the negative attitude to the sexual drive is a theme that recurrs frequently in the Gold- und Rosenkreuz writings and runs counter to the Enlightenment tendency towards a more emancipated attitude to sexuality.

Gnostic systems frequently involve a conception of creation taking place in a series of emanations or gradations from pure spirit down to dense matter. Such a system is the sephirothic Tree of Life in the Kabbalah, the Jewish mystical tradition, which bears strong similarities to Gnosticism and which was taken up and adapted by Christian esotericists. The Tree of Life represents a series of ten stages of emanation, called *sephiroth*.[34] Gold- und Rosenkreuz documents often refer reverentially to the Kabbalah and sometimes include kabbalistic illustrations. For example, the instructions for the fifth grade include a picture of a crowned figure surmounting the ten *sephiroth* of the Tree of Life, in descending order: Kether, Chochmah, Binah, Chesed, Geburah, Tiphereth, Netzach, Hod, Jesod and Malkuth.[35] In the text of the instructions

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[31] *Starke Erweise*, p. 25. The original reads as follows: ... die verborgenen Kräfte derselben [i.e. der Natur] wirksam zu machen, das unter den Schlacken des Fluchs tief eingekehrte, inwärts gekehrte Licht der Natur zu entfesseln, und herauszukehren, und dadurch einem jeden würdigen Bruder eine Fackel anzuzünden, bey deren hellen Schein er den unsichtbaren Gott, die Majestät des Allvaters, näher erkennen ... und also mit dem Urquell des Lichts näher vereinigt ... werden mögen.

[32] Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (Leipzig, Koehler und Amelang, 1977; English version, Edinburgh, T.& T.Clark, 1984; New York, Harper and Row paperback, 1987), Harper edition, pp. 257-8.

[33] *Starke Erweise*, pp. 46-7. Original reads: "Die Wollust, oder der thörichte Trieb der Menschen zur Zeugung, oder vielmehr seine unreine Fleischeslüste zu befriedigen, macht auch oft dem Wiedergebohrnen noch den meisten Kampf, so häßlich und erniedrigend er auch für die erste Würde der Menschen und für seine künftige Hoheit im Himmel ist."

[34] See, *inter alia*, C.D. Ginsburg, *The Kabbalah* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955; New York, Weiser, 1970), and Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (London, Thames & Hudson, 1955).

[35] Bernhard Beyer, *Das Lehrsystem der Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* (Leipzig/Berlin, Pansophie-Verlag, 1925; Leipzig/Berlin, Freimaurer-Museum, 1925), p. 210.

these *sephiroth* are made to correspond to ten stages of a lengthy alchemical operation.

Another feature of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz system was its fondness for cipher alphabets (or, more strictly speaking, code alphabets), which varied according to the grade. These were occasionally used in communications to encode names, but as they were straightforward substitution codes, using simple hieroglyphs, they probably served more to titillate than to conceal.

The cornerstone of the whole Gold- und Rosenkreuz system was its alchemical teaching and practice. It was largely this that gave the order its special mystique. This aspect, which deserves a chapter to itself, will be treated next.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ALCHEMY OF THE GOLD- UND ROSENKREUZ

The late survival of alchemical practice in the German-speaking world is a striking exception to the general rapid decline of alchemy from the late 17th century onwards as chemistry advanced. Whereas almost everywhere else alchemy had, by the end of the 18th century, ceased to be taken seriously by all but a small minority, in Germany it retained a large number of practitioners, and the alchemical world-view continued to have a significant influence in many areas of thought. This alchemical survival was closely associated with the revival of Rosicrucianism, since in the 18th century the terms "Rosicrucian" and "alchemist" were intimately linked. Thus the strength of the alchemical tradition provided a basis for the Rosicrucian revival, and that revival in turn helped to keep alchemy alive. Since the Gold- und Rosenkreuz was the main organized manifestation of the Rosicrucian revival it played a significant part in this process. Before examining the alchemy of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz in detail it would be useful to survey the history of alchemy over the previous two centuries.

As Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs points out in her study of Newton's alchemy, up to the 17th century alchemy had always been made up of two inseparable components: "(1) a secret knowledge or understanding and (2) the labor at the furnace."[1] She continues:

> "It may be noted ... that alternative overemphases on first one side then the other side of alchemy do seem to have occurred about the beginning of the seventeenth century. The result was an irreversible disintegration of the old alchemy. The overemphasis on the psychological side probably occurred first. ... The reaction of more rationally minded intellects to the extreme mysticism of that movement then resulted in an overemphasis on the material aspects of alchemy. In the sequence the intertwined halves were split apart and the psychological side ... degenerated into theosophy and so-called spiritual chemistry. Conversely, the laboratory side ... became a rational study of matter for its own sake."[2]

The emphasis on the theosophical approach to alchemy became particularly prominent in 16th-century Germany, where the traditions of Hermeticism, Neo-Platonism and the Kabbalah, which had been revived in the Renaissance,

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1 Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs, *The Foundations of Newton's Alchemy* (Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 27.

2 Dobbs, p. 29.

had fallen on ripe soil. It was this environment that produced the man who did more than any other to shape the development of European alchemy from then on: Paracelsus, or, to give him his real name: Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim (1493-1541). F. Sherwood Taylor in his book *The Alchemists* observes that the career of Paracelsus marks a new departure in alchemy. Whereas the earlier alchemists had concentrated on the making of precious metals, Paracelsus was the first to turn his attention wholly towards healing. Furthermore, Paracelsus gave a new prominence to the spiritual component in alchemy. As Taylor writes:

> His conception of nature is almost entirely a spiritual one, and perhaps his principal idea is the existence of quintessences in things, of an activity that can be separated or at least concentrated, so giving a particularly active medicine. The human body and each of its organs was supposed by him to be activated and guided by an "archaeus" which was a spiritual being and which was influenced by the heavenly bodies, which were of the same nature. The quintessences, arcana, and other medicines that he tried to make were likewise spiritual, being full of the fifth element and so adapted to bring the heavenly influences to the archaeus.[3]

A further important Paracelsian innovation was that he and his followers replaced the four Aristotelian elements of fire, air, earth and water with three principles, salt, sulphur and mercury, which were of course not the chemical substances known today by these names. They corresponded respectively to body, soul and spirit. Salt was a principle of solidity, sulphur was a fiery principle and mercury was a principle of volatility.[4] Although these were intended to supplant the old Aristotelian scheme, what happened was that alchemy soon incorporated both the four elements and the three principles. Chemistry, on the other hand, ultimately abandoned the three-principle theory, although historians of science acknowledge that modern chemistry owes a great deal to Paracelsus for the way in which he emphasized experiment and observation.[5]

An important point is also made by Désirée Hirst when she points out the Gnostic or Neo-Platonic character of Paracelsus' alchemy:

> His outlook was basically Gnostic, or at any rate Neo-Platonic; and this was well understood by one of his critics, Daniel Sennert, who insisted that one very characteristic Paracelsian idea was really Manichean. This was the belief that the seeds of disease, scattered all over the world, embodied the evil principle that, after the Fall, invaded the seeds of purity created by God.[6]

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3 F. Sherwood Taylor, *The Alchemists* (London, Heinemann, 1951), p. 196.

4 Taylor, pp. 198-9.

5 See John Maxson Stillman, *The Story of Alchemy and Early Chemistry* (New York, Dover, 1960).

6 Désirée Hirst, *Hidden Riches* (London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964), p. 62.

By the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th a whole school of theosophical alchemists was operative. Such were, for example, Heinrich Khunrath (*circa* 1560-1601), Michael Maier (*circa* 1568-1622), Michael Sendivogius (1566-1646) and the Englishman Robert Fludd (1574-1637). This movement was marked by a deep conviction that alchemy and divine illumination went hand in hand. Khunrath, for example, as Professor Dobbs points out, "identified the Philosopher's Stone with Jesus Christ, the 'Son of the Macrocosm,' and thought that its discovery would reveal the true wholeness of the macrocosm just as Christ gave wholeness to the microcosm, man".[7] No less mystical in his outlook was Robert Fludd, who believed that alchemy was a deep well of divine truth. Fludd is also significant for having defended the Rosicrucians in such works as *Tractatus Apologeticus Integritatem Societas de Rosea Cruce defendens* (published at Leiden in 1617). In one of the most famous debates in the history of science, Fludd clashed with the French scientist, theologian and Minorite friar Marin Mersenne (1548-1646), a friend and supporter of Descartes, who bitterly opposed the mystical alchemists and held that chemistry should be completely divorced from theology. In a series of written exchanges Fludd defended his position against Mersenne and later against the latter's friend Gassendi, famous for his promotion of the Epicurean atomic theory of matter.

Although Fludd did not give way, his vision of a chemistry married to theology was to be increasingly undermined by the progressive severance of chemistry from alchemy during the 17th century. A key figure in this process was Robert Boyle who, in the 1660s, adopted an atomistic approach to chemistry that helped to pave the way to the discovery of the chemical elements in the modern sense. Although some chemists continued to believe in transmutation, the approach of chemistry was increasingly rational and objective.

By the beginning of the 18th century there were two widely separated poles: on the one hand the nascent modern chemistry, on the other an alchemy still allied to a Hermetic/theosophical/kabbalistic world view. From then on the latter lost ground increasingly rapidly, except in Germany; for although chemistry developed in the German-speaking lands as it did in other countries, the practice of alchemy continued alongside it with remarkable tenacity. The reasons for this lie partly in the existence of a powerful esoteric strain in German religion that had become closely allied with alchemy, a combination that is strikingly exemplified in the writings of the Protestant mystic Jacob Boehme (1575-1624). Boehme's circle of friends included a number of alchemists and Paracelsian physicians, and his writings are deeply tinged with alchemical imagery.[8]

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[7] Dobbs, p. 53.

[8] See Désirée Hirst, pp. 86-7.

When the Pietist movement emerged in the last quarter of the 17th century it was profoundly inspired by the writings of Boehme, and it is therefore not surprising to find that alchemy featured in the imagery of the Pietists and was often practised in Pietist circles. Ronald Gray, in his study of Goethe's alchemy, writes:

> Jacob Boehme ... had made much use of alchemical language in his writings, and one of his later and more fanatical followers, the Pietist Gottfried Arnold, had quoted extensively from alchemical works in his voluminous *History of the Church and Heretics*. It is possible to say, therefore, that wherever in Germany Pietism was strong, as it was in Frankfurt, there was likely to be also some belief in the validity of alchemy.[9]

Gray discusses the influence on Goethe of his Pietist friend Fräulein von Klettenberg, under whose encouragement he read widely on the subject of alchemy and undertook practical alchemical experiments. He attributed his recovery from an illness in 1768 to the taking of an alchemical preparation.[10]

The alchemical motif is present not only in the earlier Pietist writers such as Arnold, but also equally strongly in later ones such as Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782). In his history of Pietism, Albrecht Ritschl writes of Oetinger:

> His appreciation of chemistry as an aid to the understanding of holy scripture must be taken into account. In 1746 in Walddorf he began to read the alchemical writers and to undertake chemical experiments with the aim of confirming his theological concepts. On this theme he wrote in 1748 to Count von Castell: "To learn from chemistry the true metaphysic of the holy scripture is to learn something from which one can derive a firm certainty in this insanely philosophical, deeply fanatical...age..." And in 1749: "Chemistry and theology are for me not two things but one thing."[11]

Further confirmation of the alchemical strain in Pietism is found in the language of the Pietists. August Langen, in his book *Der Wortschatz des deutschen Pietismus*, points out: "The most widespread complex of symbols [used by the Pietists], serving as metaphors for the purification of the soul, stems from gold smelting and from alchemy."He goes on to cite passages where Pietist writers compare God to a Schmelzer and speak of the *"heilige Tinktur"* and the divine *"Quintessenz"*.[12]

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[9] Ronald D.Gray, *Goethe the Alchemist* (Cambridge University Press, 1952), p. 4.

[10] Gray, pp. 4-7.

[11] Albrecht Ritschl, *Geschichte des Pietismus in der lutherischen Kirche des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, 3 vols. (Bonn, Adolph Marcus, 1880-86), Vol. III, p. 140.

[12] August Langen, *Der Wortschatz des deutschen Pietismus* (2nd edition, Tübingen, Max Niemayr, 1968), pp. 71-3.

Arguably one of the reasons for the link between alchemy and Pietism is that both were tinged with what might be termed a gnostic world view. Without trying to prove or disprove a connection with the early Christian heresy called Gnosticism, it is possible to speak usefully of a gnostic outlook that has made its appearance in various contexts and at various periods in history. A reading of such classic studies as Kurt Rudolph's *Gnosis*[13] and Steven Runciman's *The Medieval Manichee*[14] reveals the essential characteristic of Gnosticism to be a dualistic view which separates the universe into spirit and matter and sees the latter as the creation of a mischievous lower god, or demiurge. Human beings, according to this view, are trapped in the world of matter with all its woes, but at the same time they possess a divine spark which is their link with the spiritual world and can be their means of redemption provided they come into possession of the right knowledge or *gnosis*.

Pietism did not speak of a demiurge, but its view of the world was very similar to gnostic dualism, as the following verse, *Pilgrim's Thought*, by the Pietist writer Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1769), illustrates:

> My body and the world are a strange dwelling place for me.
> I think: Let it go; you will soon be leaving.
> He who lives here as a citizen busies himself with great matters;
> He calls me wretched and stupid but is himself a fool.[15]

Similarly, the spiritual form of alchemy that has been described was also informed by a gnostic outlook in which gold was seen as an embodiment of the divine spark in matter, and the work of the alchemist was to raise base matter towards the golden, divine state and in so doing to raise himself spiritually. The gnostic element in Paracelsus has already been remarked upon. It is also very obvious in the writings of the later alchemists and in many of the neo-Rosicrucian writings. It is not surprising, therefore, that where there was Pietism there was also likely to be alchemy.

At its highest level, therefore, alchemy represented a profound spiritual yearning. At its lowest level it was charlatanry or a deluded search for riches through transmutation. Both extremes were present in the alchemy of 18th-century Germany, and both no doubt contributed to its survival.

The early decades of the century saw an increase in the number of alchemical works produced in Germany, both in printed and manuscript form,[16] and a

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[13] Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis*, translated by Robert McLachlan Wilson (Edinburgh, T.& T.Clark, 1984).

[14] Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee* (Cambridge University Press, 1947).

[15] From *Geistliches Blumen-Gärtlein inniger Seelen* (Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1823), quoted in *Pietists: Selected Writings*, translated and edited by Peter C. Erb (London, SPCK, 1983), p. 249.

[16] Hermann Kopp, *Die Alchemie*, 2 vols. (Heidelberg, Carl Winter, 1886), Vol. II, p. 8.

number of these were, as we have seen, linked with a newly revived Rosicrucianism (see Chapter 2). As the historian of alchemy, Hermann Kopp, remarks: "The small amount that had originally been said about alchemy, as part of the activities of the Rosicrucian brotherhood, was rapidly linked, in the imaginations of many and the pretensions of not a few, to the notion that alchemy was a major part of the fraternity's endeavours."[17] Although the extent of alchemical activity in Germany is difficult to quantify, there is evidence that it had a substantial number of followers and that the issue of the validity or invalidity of alchemy continued to be debated seriously throughout the greater part of the 18th century.

Many of the nobility are reported to have patronized or practised alchemy. One of them was Duke Ernst August of Saxe-Weimar (who reigned with his uncle from 1707 and alone from 1728 to 1748), the grandfather of Goethe's patron Karl August. According to Kopp he had "a great penchant for the occult sciences and also occupied himself in a practical way with alchemy".[18] Another Duke, according to Kopp, namely Karl of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, resorted to alchemy in the hope of making gold to pay off his huge debts,[19] and a similar pecuniary motive evidently inspired Prince Ludwig Georg Karl of Hessen-Darmstadt (1749-1823) in employing a alchemist named Tayssen, whom he had brought from Italy.[20] Yet another nobleman preoccupied with alchemy was Duke Ferdinand of Braunschweig (1721-1792), who reportedly had an alchemical laboratory in his castle at Vechelde.[21]

In Austria the practice of alchemy reached epidemic proportions. At its height, according to Kopp, there are said to have been some 10,000 alchemists in Vienna, including Maria Theresa's husband Francis (made Emperor in 1745) who is reported to have had a laboratory in the royal palace.[22] This figure is probably exaggerated, but the popularity of alchemy among the masonic fraternity in Vienna is confirmed in a work published in 1786, entitled *Briefe eines Biedermannes an einen Biedermann ueber die Freymaurer in Wien*. In his third letter the anonymous correspondent writes:

> In my last letter I forgot to mention an important phenomenon which is causing the lodges here to be crowded by many profane people: namely the secrets whose

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17 Kopp, Vol. II, p. 6.

18 Kopp, Vol. I, p. 139.

19 Kopp, Vol. I, p. 140. It is not quite clear to whom Kopp is referring here. He probably either means Karl I of Braunschweig-Lüneburg-Wolfenbüttel (born 1713, reigned 1735-80) or his son Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand (born 1735, reigned 1780-1806).

20 Kopp, Vol. I, p. 11.

21 Kopp, Vol. I, p. 11.

22 Kopp, Vol. I, p. 20.

> disclosure these people expect to find in our bosom. Some fancy that we can make gold. Others ascribe to us the arcanum of the elixir of life. ...
>
> You need only leaf through the book lists in the *Wienerzeitung* ... to learn the spirit of today's Viennese freemasons. And who do you think are the people who mostly give themselves over to these sciences? People who do not even know the ABC of chemistry.[23]

Despite this unflattering picture, it was not only greedy or credulous people who were attracted towards alchemy. Many were drawn to it out of deeper motives. The example of Goethe has already been mentioned in this regard. Another example is that of the writer Heinrich Jung-Stilling (1740-1817) who relates in his memoirs how he became interested in alchemy as a young man. At the age of 20, while working as a schoolmaster in the village of Klafeld (which he calls Kleefeld), he became acquainted with a man whom he calls Glaser, a schoolmaster in a neighbouring village who gave himself out as an alchemist.

> In order to keep Stilling's friendship he [Glaser] spoke always of great secrets. He said he undertood how to control magical and sympathetic forces, and once he confided to Stilling, under the seal of the greatest confidentiality, that he knew extremely well the first matter of the Stone of the Philosophers. Stilling was exceedingly pleased by this acquaintance, indeed he even hoped that one day, through the help of his friend, he might become an adept. Graser lent him the works of Basilius Valentinus, and he read through them most attentively. ...
>
> I can say with assurance that Stilling's interest in alchemy never had the Stone of the Philosophers as its aim, though he would have been glad to have found it. Rather, a basic yearning in his soul began to develop as he matured, an insatiable hunger for knowledge of the primal forces of nature. ...
>
> At that time alchemy seemed to be the way to that knowledge, and therefore he read all writings pertaining to it that he could get hold of.[24]

Meanwhile chemical research had advanced in Germany as everywhere else, progressively widening the gap between chemistry and alchemy. The works of the Dutch chemist Hermann Boerhaave (1668-1735), for example, were widely read in Germany. Boerhaave had taken the claims of the alchemists sufficiently seriously to carry out some carefully controlled experiments on the transmutation of metals. For example, he kept mercury for 15 years at a warm temperature in an unsealed vessel and for six months at a high temperature in a sealed vessel, and he also distilled a quantity of mercury 500 times, but he never succeeded in producing any material change. In another experi-

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[23] Anon., *Briefe eines Biedermannes an einen Biedermann ueber die Freymaurerei in Wien* (Munich, 1786), pp. 19-21.

[24] Heinrich Jung-Stilling, *Heinrich Jung-Stillings Jugend, Jünglingsjahre und Wanderschaft* (Hamburg, Alfred Janssen, 1911), pp. 140-42.

ment he tested an alchemical recipe for generating mercury from lead, again without success despite many repetitions under different conditions.[25] Such experiments made it increasingly difficult for the alchemists to justify their traditional claims.

For a time a theory incorporating a remnant of alchemical thought held wide sway among the scientific community in Europe. This was the phlogiston theory of the German Georg Ernst Stahl (1666-1734), which sought to explain combustion in terms of an all-pervasive principle of fire corresponding roughly to the alchemical concept of sulphur.[26] Although demolished by Lavoisier in the 1780s, this theory continued to have its adherents in Germany even into the 19th century.[27] An example was the Bavarian physician, scientist and Christian mystic Franz von Baader, who saw phlogiston in mystical terms, describing it as "the world-soul which enlivens everything with its all-pervading breath".[28]

A person of alchemical inclinations thus had a number of alternative responses to the challenge from chemistry. One possibility was to treat alchemy as a purely spiritual language which was not concerned with the physical realm and required no physical proof. A second was to attempt, as the phlogistonists did, to adapt alchemical notions in the light of the latest chemical research. A third option was to reject the foundations of contemporary science as a delusion and to claim that true knowledge came from divine illumination and could never be attained by reason and experiment alone.

It was largely the third approach that was taken by the Gold- und Rosenkreuz and by those who invoked the Rosicrucian heritage. They explicitly rejected many concepts that had become axiomatic for the mainstream of science. In the realm of astronomy, for example, some of them preferred the old geocentric universe to the post-Copernican heliocentric model. This point of view was defended as late as 1802 by the author of a neo-Rosicrucian alchemical manuscript in the Austrian National Library entitled *Aleph*, whose author, calling himself Archarion, writes:

> It is ridiculous that, out of an arrogant desire to be taken for wise, even worthy men are taken in by the system of Kepler and the arch-fool Copernicus. A Christian should be ashamed to give approval to this system which negates the Holy Spirit, the Five Books of Moses and especially the Book of Genesis.[29]

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[25] John Maxson Stillman, *The Story of Alchemy and Early Chemistry*, pp. 432-3.

[26] Stillman, pp. 424-60.

[27] I am indebted to the scientific historian Dr. Hans Schneider of St. Cross College, Oxford, for making available to me his researches on this subject.

[28] Franz von Baader, *Vom Wärmestoff* (Munich, 1786), p. 30.

[29] Archarion, "Aleph" (Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek, manuscript Cod. Ser. n. 2845).

Another Rosicrucian writer, Carl Hubert Lobreich von Plumenoek, denied the atomic theory of matter, as will be seen in the next chapter. Although the Rosicrucian apologists varied in the extent to which they rejected such theories categorically, what they all shared was a belief in the supremacy of divine illumination over purely secular science.

This view was most forcefully expressed when it came to alchemy, as is illustrated by a manuscript dated 1768 in the Wellcome Institute Library entitled *Schlüssel der wahren Weisheit.*[30] The title page bears the initials "F.C.R.", almost certainly a transposition of "F.R.C." standing for "Frater Rosae Crucis", and there is a stipulation that the manuscript is to be used "only by the children of the lilies and roses", another Rosicrucian reference. The text takes the form of a dialogue between Sophista and Sapientia. Sophista begins by lamenting that she has laboured hard to obtain the Stone of the Philosophers, but has so far had no success. Sapientia then replies:

> Why are you sitting there so sadly? You should know that I have been sent to you by your Creator and mine in order to show you why your noble efforts over so many years have been wasted and destroyed, coming, as they do, from your own will and not from that of your Creator. You trust your own wisdom far too much. If Nature were all at once to reveal her treasures to you, treasures that she guards with many locks and seals, then your mind would immediately be overtaken by arrogance.

Sapientia then goes on to promise to help Sophista on condition that she swears before God never to give the key to anyone without her (Sapientia's) knowledge.

In the Gold- und Rosenkreuz itself, alchemy was present on both a theoretical and a practical level. On the theoretical level, alchemical ideas and symbols were incorporated into the rituals of initiation and the teachings that accompanied each grade. On the practical level, laboratory alchemy was an important part of the work of the order from the third degree onwards, and the higher up a member progressed in the order, the more alchemical knowledge was revealed to him. This knowledge was contained partly in the instructions that went with initiation, partly in manuscripts that circulated among the members.

Already in the first degree of Junior there were alchemical elements present, as when the initiate was told that the sun, moon and stars corresponded to the three philosophical principles of salt, sulphur and mercury.[31] In the following degree of Theoreticus the initiate was given more detailed, but still theore-

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[30] Manuscript 4421.

[31] Berhard Beyer, *Das Lehrsystem der Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* (Leipzig/Berlin, Pansophia, 1925), p. 99.

tical, information about alchemy. Thus a manuscript of instructions for this degree contains information about the relationship of the seven traditional planets to seven metals—gold, silver, mercury, copper, iron, tin and lead corresponding respectively to sun, moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. The gnostic basis of the order's alchemy is underlined by the passage referring to the sun and gold.

> Just as the heavenly sun is the most excellent of all the planets, so also the earthly sun, or gold, is the noblest of the metals. This we can recognize from the mysterious point [ie the dot in the middle of the circle, used as the sign for the sun and gold] which otherwise signifies the deity but here indicates an incorruptible and pure substance.[32]

The third degree, that of Practicus, was, as the name suggests, the one in which practical information on alchemy was introduced for the first time. The instructions for the Practicus contain a description of the kind of laboratory needed for alchemical work. It should be "secluded and spacious, with thick walls, good ventilation and a closet for equipment" and should contain an oven and a *balneum mariae* (a kind of water bath used for gentle heating) as well as such items as retorts, flasks, distillation vessels, filters and crucibles. The instructions add that, if a member cannot afford such equipment, the Master can make a contribution "so that at least the most urgent necessities can be met and the individual can learn something from experience". Furthermore the Master must take care that alchemical undertakings do not become a burden, for this would be "very disadvantageous to the Order". There follows a series of recipes for such processes as the preparation of a menstruum (liquid used for extraction) from vegetable or animal matter and the creation of a regulus of antimony.[33] Further recipes, often illustrated with diagrams of laboratory equipment, are contained in the instructions for subsequent grades.

Some members had their own laboratories. In other cases the circle had a common laboratory which the members could use. This was so in the case of the Kassel circle to which Georg Forster belonged. The list of expenses for equipping this laboratory, drawn up by Forster in April 1782, reveals what an enormously costly business the practice of alchemy could be. Two iron smelting ovens cost 16 Taler the pair, another type of oven called a *Kapellofen* cost 3 Taler, and two athanors (devices for fuelling an oven) cost 73 Taler 10 Groschen and 2 Kreuzer. The total for the whole fitting out of the laboratory came

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[32] Beyer, p. 154. Beyer is here quoting from a manuscript entitled "Fr. & A.C. Concordanzmässige Constitutiones der drey ersten Classen derer Juniorum, Theoreticum, Practicum," formerly in the collection of the Bayreuther Freimaurer-Museum, hereafter referred to as "Concordanzmässige Constitutiones".

[33] Beyer, pp. 163-4, quoting from "Concordanzmässige Constitutiones".

to 156 Taler,[34] a substantial sum in relation to salaries of that era.[35] The high costs involved in the alchemical work must have made great demands on the purses of the members and would explain the provision for subsidizing the more impecunious ones.

To understand the alchemical processes carried out by the Gold- und Rosenkreuz one must always bear in mind the world-view behind them, in which the material realm, although separated from the divine, was permeated by a divine element which could be refined out. This divine element was often referred to as the "quintessence" to distinguish it from the four elements of air, fire, earth and water. It was the universal vital fluid, the breath that animated everything and was central to all alchemical operations, for this substance was a *sine qua non* for the making of alchemical medicines and for the preparation of the Philosophers' Stone used in the transmutation of metals. This vital essence was believed to be particularly concentrated in certain substances such as dew, wine and bodily secretions. By collecting a sufficient quantity of one of these substances and distilling it one could obtain the quintessence. Thus in the manuscript called the *Testamentum der Fraternität Rosae et Aureae Crucis* we read:

> Man has all treasures in his possession and carries them in his body!
>
> If he is God-fearing he can seek out and prepare the Mysterium Magnum from himself as from the wide world:
>
> First, he has this power concealed in his blood, for this contains the vital spirit, and from it you can prepare a tincture that will place all the spirits under heaven at your service ... and from which you can obtain a medicine to bring the dead to life.
>
> Secondly, you can, if you live chastely and purely, prepare from urine the Stone of our beloved Elders, as well as the alkahest.

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[34] Gerhard Steiner, *Freimaurer und Rosenkreuzer*, pp. 87-8.

[35] An idea of what the sum meant in terms of salaries at about that time can be obtained by comparing it with the cumulative salaries that Justus Möser received for the posts that he collected throughout his career, beginning in 1742 and reaching a peak in terms of earnings in the 1770s. His posts and their salaries were as follows:

	Taler
Ritterschaftlicher Syndikus:	90
Advocatus patriae:	100
Ad dies vitae:	200
Kriminal justitiar:	535
Konsulent:	600
Referendar:	350

Source: Jonanthan B. Knudsen, *Justus Möser and the German Enlightenment* (Cambridge University Press, 1986). Consider also Wöllner's annual salary of 520 Taler as rent-collector and administrator for Prince Henry of Prussia, which he received from 1767 to 1786 (see Chapter 7). The laboratory would have cost 30 per cent of this.

> Thirdly, you can, from the urine and faeces of a healthy man, prepare the Great Work.[36]

There are also many accounts and depictions of the collecting of dew for similar purposes. For example, the masonic historian Gustav Brabée, in his book *Sub Rosa—Vertrauliche Mitteilungen aus dem Leben unserer Grossväter*, writes:

> During the years 1782 and 1783 there existed an alchemical society in Vienna which gave itself the pompous name of the "high, wise, noble and excellent Knights of the Shooting Star". Their assemblies took place two or three times a week, especially on cold, clear nights in late autumn, in the extensive grounds of an estate near Vienna belonging to a count, and were always surrounded by secrecy. ... Armed servants guarded the entrances and exits during the sessions, and allowed no one to pass who could not give the password. Well-mounted brethren often went off separately for entire nights, covering a wide area looking for the fallen shooting star. They would bring their booty back to their impatient companions who would place it in a round vessel and keep it there until it turned to gold.[37]

The "fallen shooting star" referred to the morning dew which was believed to be the perspiration of the stars. A procedure for collecting and processing dew is also described in the instructions for the seventh grade of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, that of Adeptus Exemptus:

> Take as much as you like of that material, which can most easily be found in stony meadows, transparent and gleaming like emerald, or also in sandy hills. ... Collect it in the sign of the Ram early before sunrise; its colour is between green and yellow. Collect it as carefully as possible, clean it and rid it of foreign impurities.
>
> NB. As soon as you have soaked up some of it, for which you need a sheet of clean linen, you must immediately put it into a glass vessel and close it securely, for the most subtle spirits can easily evaporate. ...
>
> When your vessel is carefully sealed, dig a trench about two fathoms deep in a dry place, making a special hole for each vessel; put your vessels in and, to make sure they do not break, cover each hole with an earthenware plate. After you have covered your trench over again leave the material to putrefy for 40 days. When you take it out after the elapse of this period you will see, to your great astonishment, that your material has been changed into a very pure blood ... and restored to a true quintessence of nature. ...[38]

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[36] "Testamentum der Fraternität Rosae et Aureae Crucis", Osterreichische Nationalbibliothek, manuscript Cod. Ser. n. 2897; also reproduced in Archarion, *Von wahrer Alchemie* (Freiburg-im-Breisgau, Hermann Bauer, 1967), p. 165.

[37] Quoted by Karl R.H. Frick, *Licht und Finsternis*, Vol. I (Graz, Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1975), p. 353.

[38] Quoted by Beyer, pp. 228-9, from a manuscript entitled "Rituale und Instruktionen für den 4.-7. Grad der Gold- und Rosenkreuzer," formerly in the Bayreuther Freimaurer-Museum.

The reason why the material had to be left for 40 days is explained in the instructions for the grade of Philosophus. The number 40 occurs repeatedly in the Bible. For example, it was 40 days and nights of rain that caused the Flood, 40 days and and nights before the Flood subsided, 40 years that the Children of Israel remained in the wilderness, 40 days and nights that Christ fasted in the desert. Thus 40 is a number that occurs repeatedly in alchemical workings.[39]

To subscribe to such doctrines was to be connected to a *Weltanschauung* that was fundamentally at odds with the purely rational, experimental and essentially secular basis of the nascent modern chemistry practised by Lavoisier and his ilk. Thus it is no coincidence that alchemy so often went hand in hand with a counter-Enlightenment position, even in the case of people who were not members of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. An example is the Munich Court Councillor, Archivist to the Elector and esoteric writer Karl von Eckartshausen (1752-1803), who was an active alchemist.[40] An exception was Georg Forster, essentially a man of the Enlightenment who nevertheless, as we have seen, belonged for a time to the Gold- und Rosenkreuz and practised alchemy diligently. In the end, however, as we shall see (Chapter 8), Forster became disenchanted with both the order and alchemy. Forster's case is highly instructive, partly because it enables us to view the practice of alchemy through the eyes of an educated person of the time and partly because of the way in which Forster was ultimately unable to reconcile alchemy with his Enlightenment position.

In 1781 the minutes of the Kassel Rosicrucian lodge show Forster and a group of his fellow members engaged making extracts and tinctures of plants, according to the Paracelsian salt, sulphur and mercury theory, and working with metals according to the recipes given in the *Triumphal Chariot of Antimony* by the 15th-century alchemist Basilius Valentinus. Forster and his colleagues also followed the practice of collecting dew for alchemical work, as is revealed by a letter written by Forster to the Circle Director on 5 September 1780 in which he descibes visiting a swampy meadow overgrown with grass and herbs but finding, on the morning in question, that "nothing had fallen".[41]

The diligence with which Forster studied alchemy is revealed in the list of books in his library, compiled at the time of their sale after his death.[42] An important item on his shelves was *Der Compass der Weisen*, by Ketmia Vere, which appeared at Berlin and Leipzig in 1779, allegedly "on the express com-

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[39] Beyer, quoting from the above manuscript.

[40] See Antoine Faivre, *Eckartshausen et la théosophie chrétienne* (Paris, Klincksiek, 1969), pp. 501-509.

[41] Steiner, p. 90.

[42] Steiner, pp. 118ff.

mand of the higher Superiors".[43] This compilation of alchemical material, which was regarded as a bible by the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, is prefaced with the familiar claims about the Rosicrucian order, its antiquity, its possession of ancient wisdom and its knowledge of the secrets of nature. Other works in Forster's library included Georg von Welling's *Opus mago-cabbalisticum et theosophicum*, which also influenced the young Goethe, Georg Ernst Stahl's *Fundamenta chymiae dogmaticae et experimentalis*, which contained alchemical material, as well as works of regular chemistry and mettalurgy as opposed to alchemy.

After his departure from the Gold- und Rosenkreuz in 1783, Forster became correspondingly disenchanted with alchemy, and on 14 August 1784 he wrote from Vienna to Sömmering, who had also left the order:

> Formerly I believed that one could not accept the idea of transmutation without at the same time believing in the existence of a spiritual world and the possibility of communicating with it. Now nature is everything to me, and I really cannot see how one can deduce the existence of immaterial things, even if transmutation were true.[44]

Although rejected by Forster and other proponents of the Enlightenment, alchemy continued as an undercurrent to exert an important influence in Germany. Among those who took it seriously was one Johann Christian Friedrich Bährens (1765-1833), whose alchemical pursuits are discussed in an article by Karl Frick.[45] Significantly, Bährens came from a Pietistically inclined family background. After studying theology at Halle, he settled down in Meinerzhagen in Westphalia as a schoolteacher and pastor. He also practised medicine, at first unofficially, then officially after presenting a successful dissertation and being awarded a medical degree in 1799. His alchemical activities are revealed in a correspondence which he carried on with his friend Carl Arnold Kortum, also an apologist for alchemy, from 1795-1805. In 1796 Bährens founded an alchemical society called the Hermetische Gesellschaft by placing a notice advertising it in the *Reichsanzeiger* of 8 October 1796. This initiated a heated debate among the readers of the newspaper, some defending alchemy, others attacking it vehemently. Subsequently an attempt was made to start a periodical called the *Hermetisches Journal*, but this appeared only for one issue in 1801.[46]

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[43] Ketmia Vere, *Der Compaß der Weisen, von einem Mitverwandten der inneren Verfassung der ächten und rechten Freymaurerei beschrieben* (Berlin/Leipzig, 1779), p. 15.

[44] *Einiges aus dem Leben und der Zeit zweier wenig bekannter Freimaurer des 18ten Jahrhunderts* (Zeulenroda/Leipzig, Das Freimaurer-Museum, 1930), p. 191.

[45] Karl Frick, "Johann Christian Friedrich Bährens (1765-1833), ein westfälischer Pfarrer, Arzt und Alchemist", in *Sudhoffs Archiv*, Vol. 53, Part 4, May 1970 (Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner).

[46] Frick, "Bährens", pp. 428-9.

Among those who contacted the Hermetische Gesellschaft was Karl von Eckartshausen, with whom Bährens carried on a correspondence.[47] Its opponents included the physicist Johann Friedrich Benzenberg, who attacked the society in the periodical *Annalen der Physik* in 1802.[48] In 1805 the leadership of the society was taken over by a certain Baron von Sternhaym of Karlsruhe who succeeded in resurrecting the journal for a short period under the name of *Hermes*.[49]

That there is at least a tenuous link between the story of the Hermetische Gesellschaft and that of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz is suggested by the following passage from a work by the Dutch masonic historian A.A. Santing, *De Historische Rozenkruizers* (irritatingly, this author does not quote his sources for this information):

> In 1805 the director of the Hermetische Gesellschaft, L. Fr. von Sternhain [he clearly means Sternhaym] in Karlsruhe received a letter from Königsberg in Prussia, dated 25 October of that year, containing a request in the name of a group of friends of the Hermetic art that the said group be adopted by the Hermetische Gesellschaft. From this request there flowed a correspondence, which yields the following information. At the head of this group was Ernst Christian Friedrich Mayer who from 1801 was a preacher in Königsberg. Having become a freemason in 1775, he was received in Berlin in 1779 into the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. ... In 1781 he left the order, convinced that it was led by Jesuits. To the doctrines of the original order, however, he remained faithful. In 1801 in Königsberg, where a Rosicrucian circle also existed, he became acquainted with various members of the masonic lodge who had also belonged to this circle, and there awoke in them a desire once again to join together as Rosicrucians. This duly took place. As they had attached their highest expectations to alchemy, this became the foremost activity of the new association. The reason for their request to become associated with the Hermetische Gesellschaft lay in their unfamiliarity with alchemy in its practical application.[50]

By this time interest in alchemy in Germany had sharply declined, and at the beginning of the 19th century there were only 14 subscribers to the journal *Hermes*.[51] Significantly, even in its decline it remained linked with Rosicrucianism, as the Königsberg episode shows.

Although from the turn of the century onwards alchemy ceased to be a conspicuous subject of interest in Germany, its influence continued in a variety of ways. Its symbolism is found in the work of Romantic poets such as No-

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[47] Frick, "Bährens", p. 430.
[48] Frick, "Bährens", p. 430, note 19.
[49] Frick, "Bährens", p. 431.
[50] A.A. Santing, *De Historische Rozenkruisers* (12 parts, Amersfoort, Bouwsteenen, 1930-32; reprinted Amsterdam, W.N. Schors, 1977), pp. 201-2.
[51] Frick, "Bährens", p. 431.

valis, and arguably elements of alchemical thinking lie behind homoeopathic medicine.[52] Furthermore, revivals of interest in alchemy have taken place periodically, and through the works of C.G. Jung and his followers its influence is still with us. By helping to keep the alchemical tradition alive in the 18th century, the Gold- und Rosenkreuz played its part in enabling alchemy to linger defiantly on into our own time.

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[52] See Elizabeth Danciger, *The Emergence of Homoeopathy* (London, Century Hutchinson, 1987).

CHAPTER SIX

THE POLEMICAL STANCE OF THE GOLD- UND ROSENKREUZ

The antecedents and early history of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, as already outlined, suggest that it was not founded expressly as a conservative, anti-*Aufklärung* organization. Rather this tendency was there in potential from the inception of the order, but came to the fore at a later stage in response to certain issues of the day. Before discussing some of the practical repercussions brought about by the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, it will be useful to examine the general outlook and polemical position expressed by three Gold- und Rosenkreuz spokesmen.

One of the most articulate of these spokesmen was Carl Hubert Lobreich von Plumenoek, a name that is thought to be a pseudonym for one Carl Wächter, a Stuttgart advocate.[1] In 1777 he published a work entitled *Geoffenbarter Einfluß in das allgemeine Wohl der Staaten der ächten Freymäurerey aus dem wahren Endzweck ihrer ursprünglichen Stiftung erwiesen*,[2] in which he reveals himself to be a highly educated man, evidently conversant with French, English and Latin and well read in literature, history, science and theology, as his footnotes reveal. The book begins as a reply to a work by Johann Jacob Moser entitled *Von Geduldung der Freymäurer Gesellschaften*, but turns into a general polemic against what Plumenoek sees as a degenerate age.

His main text begins, in typically Rosicrucian fashion, with an account of the historical provenance of the order's occult wisdom and knowledge of the secrets of nature. This wisdom, he says, was communicated by God to Adam, then passed down to the ancient Egyptians, Chaldaeans, Persians, Indian Brahmins and Greek Pythagoreans, and later to the Celts, Gauls, Britons, Germans and other western peoples. This teaching, he says, is the basis of Freemasonry. He continues: "But in order that the Superiors could better conceal their true intentions and be more able to gauge people's desire for knowledge, they

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1 Antoine Faivre, "Friedrich Tieman und seine deutschen und russischen Freunde", in *Beförderer der Aufklärung in Mittel- und Osteuropa*, edited by Eva H. Balázs, Ludwig Hammermayer, Hans Wagner and Jerzy Wojtowicz, p. 293.

2 My quotations are taken from the second edition of this work, published in 1779 at "Amsterdam" (the place of publication is queried by Marx in his bibliography).

specially instituted the first three steps, known today as the English grades, as a nursery [Pflanzschule] for the higher levels of knowledge."[3]

Defending Freemasonry, he writes that "one would be quite correct to call us cosmopolitans, that is to say world-citizens who have the well-being of their fellow citizens very much at heart".[4] It is noteworthy, and somewhat surprising, that he uses the words "cosmopolitans" (*Kosmopoliten*) and "world-citizens" (*Weltbürger*) as terms of praise, since these were often used in a very negative sense by conservative writers of a patriotic turn of mind, one instance being Göchhausen's novel *Enthüllung des Systems der Weltbürger-Republik*, which presented a conspiracy theory to the effect that the Jesuits were promoting the *Aufklärung* to bring about a collapse of Protestantism.[5] This underlines the point that, as we shall see again, the Rosicrucian point of view did not always coincide with the views of other anti-*Aufklärung* polemicists. In the passage quoted above, Plumenoek is evidently trying to steal the thunder of the *Aufklärer* by implying that their so-called cosmopolitanism is false, whereas the Rosicrucians are the true cosmopolitans and world citizens. When we look, however, at most of Plumenoek's views on scientific, religious and social matters, we find that they add up to a strikingly anti-*Aufklärung* outlook.

Taking first his views on science, we read that *Weltweisheit*, by which he means divinely inspired wisdom, is the "handmaiden to all sciences". He then goes on to say:

> Do we not see how this essential element of learning has been distorted in our falsely named enlightened age? Do we not observe how the door has been opened to all sorts of impieties under the cloak of a purified worldly wisdom! It is this bogus philosophy [*Afterphilosophie*] that has raised up reason to be the highest judge, even over the most sacred doctrines of faith; she [philosophy] has invented a God who, unfeelingly sunk in the abyss of his perfection [*in Abgrunde seiner Volkommenheit versenkt*], is concerned only with himself, without caring about the sublunary realm or the deeds and omissions of earthly beings.[6]

Here he is presumably referring to the Cartesian view of the universe as a vast machine which God originally set in motion but does not interfere with. Contrasting sharply with this view was the Rosicrucian belief that divine forces are constantly at work in the material world at every level—a belief that is emphasized again and again in writings emanating from the Gold- und Rosenkreuz.

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[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[5] Referred to by Klaus Epstein in *The Genesis of German Conservatism* (Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 96-9.

[6] Plumenoek, p. 19.

Another scientific theory attacked by Plumenoek is that of atomism, originally conceived by Democritus and Epicurus, revived by the French cleric Gassendi in the mid 17th century and developed by Robert Boyle in his seminal work *The Sceptical Chymist* of 1661. On this subject Plumenoek writes: "I would even venture to say that, at a time when the system taught by Moschus, Leucippus, Democritus and Epicurus has received so much praise, free-thinking has increased more than ever."[7] A passage with a contemporary echo is one in which Plumenoek berates the medical profession for their mechanistic approach to healing:

> How beneficial, useful and advantageous it would be to the average citizen if conscientious young doctors, instead of immersing themselves so assiduously in their shallow, mechanical theories, were to take the trouble, with the aid of God, to learn from the sages. In this way they would grasp the fact that the human body cannot be healed unless the illness of the moving spirit is also treated. ... In this school they would also learn to release from its bonds the pure light of nature as the true medicine of the body. ... A genuine physician must also be a true philosopher and a real student of nature.[8]

This echoes the passage from Bode's *Starke Erweise* quoted towards the end of the last chapter, where the same gnostic-sounding phrase about releasing the light of nature (*das Licht der Natur zu entfesseln*) is used to describe one of the aims of the order. Here Plumenoek shows that this aim was seen by the order as having practical implications in the realm of medicine.

Plumenoek believes that the whole educational world must be purged of the corrupting influence of the *Aufklärung*—and who better to carry out this task than the true freemasons, in other words the Rosicrucians?

> As it cannot be otherwise than that our brotherhood must have achieved a high degreee of certainty in all conceivable sciences ... and as the teachings in all four faculties, or so-called main estates of the learned republic [*Hauptstände der gelehrten Republik*], have become distorted by so many dark and dangerous tenets, it is obvious not only that the elimination of these tenets is a desirable thing but also that no one is better able to carry out this task than the true, genuine and legitimate freemasons.[9]

For Plumenoek science and learning are inseparable from religion. Similarly, religion is inseparable from social and political matters, since the social order must be based on the divine order. Thus he attacks the French *philosophes* for undermining the religious basis of the state.

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7 *Ibid.*, p. 21.
8 *Ibid.*, pp. 31-5.
9 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

> Anyone who reads attentively through the writings of a Bayle, a Voltaire, an Argens and other men of this ilk will become fully convinced that their goal is nothing less than the overthrow of all religion, which is the strongest prop for the throne of a ruler and indisputably the most important factor in the moral condition of his subjects.[10]

The same anti-*Aufklärung* spirit that we find in Plumenoek is also to be found in a work published three years later, *Die Pflichten der G. und R.C. alten Sistems in Juniorats-Versammlungen*, by one Chrysophiron. It has often been claimed that this name was a pseudonym for Johann Christoph Wöllner, but Wolfstieg, in his masonic bibliography, states that the author was in fact a man named Joseph Friedrich Göhrung.[11] The book is partly an attack on a work entitled *Ueber Jesuiten, Freymaurer und deutsche Rosenkreuzer*, published at Leipzig in 1781 under the name of Aloysius Maier, a pseudonymn for the Illuminatus Baron Knigge.[12] In his foreword Chrysophiron quotes the following remark by Maier/Knigge:

> I am speaking in these pages not of the true Rosicrucians but of the present-day bogus brotherhood in Germany which uses the same name ... that plague on human society which gives itself the same title as those whose purpose was to spread happiness and truth.[13]

Maier/Knigge thus shows that he is not hostile to the Rosicrucian tradition as such, but he adds that the old Rosicrucians have completely disappeared. In answer Chrysophiron writes:

> What would you say if I were to assure you on my word of honour that ... I could give you the Christian names and surnames of well over a hundred true and genuine Rosicrucians living today in a small corner of Germany, and that, calculating from this small area, the whole of the German Fatherland must certainly contain a thousand and more of the true, old Rosicrucians.[14]

Turning to the subject of the *Aufklärung*, Chrysophiron declares:

> What upright Christian of our age does not sigh over the unbridled freethinking that is everywhere gaining ground so strongly, threatening already to lay waste to

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[10] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[11] A.Wolfstieg, *Bibliographie der freimaurerischen Literatur*, 3 vols. (Burg/Leipzig, 1911-13; reprinted Hildesheim, 1964), Vol. II, entry 42513.

[12] Arnold Marx, *Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, p. 161.

[13] Chrysophiron, *Die Pflichten der G. und R. alten Sistems in Juniorats-Versammlungen* (1782; no place of publication, but Wolfstieg, entry 42513, indicates Berlin), p. ix.

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. x-xi.

> everything, and is re-introducing barbarism, unbelief and—though it seems to run counter to the latter—the most damnable superstition and heathen theurgy.[15]

He singles out the Illuminati for special condemnation and asserts that their goal is the systematic spreading of freethinking. Contrasting this with the outlook of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, he states: "We, by contrast, acknowledge no other light here below than that of the revealed word of God and of all nature and creation, and we abhor all doctrines that have not been taught by the Lord Christ and his Apostles."[16]

Chrysophiron's religious outlook emphasizes the fallen state of the world in a way that is strongly reminiscent of the more gnostic type of Pietism: "All of us, my brethren," he writes "are conceived and born in sin; and all the thoughts and desires of the human heart are evil from childhood onwards and for evermore [das Dichten und Trachten des menschlichen Herzens ist böse von Jugend auf und immerdar]."[17] He urges: "We should overcome the world and the flesh"[18] and again makes the same point when he writes: "We should struggle to make the flesh subservient to the spirit so that we are able to withstand all the cunning approaches of the Fiend."[19]

This emphasis on original sin and the need to overcome the flesh is characteristic of counter-Enlightenment writers and contrasts with the Enlightenment tendency to play down or deny the notion of original sin and to see human beings as born merely with certain selfish but perfectly natural needs that can be accommodated in a rationally organized social system.

The gnostic viewpoint, so characteristic of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz writings, is exemplified clearly by Chrysophiron's observations on the four elements:

> Since the Fall of Adam and the corruption of the world in the time of Noah, the elements have sunk ever deeper into darkness, and that which is pure and paradisical has withdrawn ever more into itself and also to a certain extent away from us into the realms above. Similarly our Earth is no longer a pure, paradisical place where everything was brought forth without labour and in much greater perfection, and the vapour from the earth can longer be compared with the fruitful, bedewing vapour of yore, but is often poisonous and unwholesome, as everything lies under the Curse.
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> Above our atmosphere, however, is the light of heaven or pure fire and air, and thence comes blessedness and life to us.[20]

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[15] *Ibid.*, p. xx.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. xxi.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 57.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 62.
[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 51-2.

When it comes to matters of society and government, Chrysophiron's view is profoundly hierarchical:

> ... in all lands where human habitation has been discovered it has been found that, even in the absence of a true leader of the whole people, at least families submit to their eldest members. The revealed word of God discloses to us the duty of the animals to obey man, the young to obey the old, the servant his master, and the subject his prince, and the duty of all humans to be obedient to God and to those people through whom communicates His holy will. ...
>
> Natural necessity and God's command therefore demand obedience to those in authority [Gehorsam für die Obern, meaning superior authorities in general rather than the Superiors of the order, which he writes "O.O."]. ...
>
> ... there is no authority higher than God, but where there is authority it is ordained by God.[21]

Moreover he claims that these views are officially endorsed by the leaders of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz order:

> Our Superiors [i.e. in the order] write that it is God's solemn commandment that we obey the secular and spiritual authorities .. that we fear God and honour the King. Furthermore they enjoin us to be good fathers to our households and good friends to our neighbours. Strive to prove yourself always to be a faithful and obedient subject and a truly useful citizen of the State.[22]

Towards the end of the book Chrysophiron repeats his charge that the age is seriously corrupted. He declares:

> Not only all the learned followers of fashion but also many schoolteachers, Church leaders and statesmen have been struck with a terrible blindness, allowing the unbelief and superstition of heathen times ... to advance anew with gigantic steps.[23]

The anti-*Aufklärung* point of view that we have seen expressed by Plumenoek and Chrysophiron is shared by another vociferous Rosicrucian writer, Dr Bernhard Joseph Schleiß von Löwenfeld, a physician to the ducal house at Sulzbach in the Upper Palatinate and, according to many sources, a leading member of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz.[24] Under the name of Phoebron he wrote a short work entitled *Der im Lichte der Wahrheit strahlende Rosenkreuzer*,[25]

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[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 120-22.

[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 125-6.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 128.

[24] He is, for example, discussed in Hans Graßl's *Aufbruch zur Romantik* (Munich, C.H. Beck, 1968).

[25] *Der im Lichte der Wahrheit strahlende Rosenkreuzer allen lieben Mitmenschen auch dem Magister Pianco zum Nutzen hingestellt von Phoebron* (Leipzig, Hilscher, 1782).

which appeared in 1782 as a reply to Magister Pianco's exposé of Rosicrucianism, *Der Rosenkreuzer in seiner Blöße*.[26]
We shall encounter Schleiß again in connection with the case of the exorcist Gaßner, but it would be relevant here to examine his general world view.

Like Plumenoek, to whom he refers admiringly, Schleiß attacks the atomistic theory of matter. With obvious irony he writes:

> Vive le nom de Monsieur Francois Arouet de Voltaire, du Marquis d'Argens et Rousseau! These great men have opened my eyes, so that I no longer believe any of those things [i.e. the ancient esoteric teachings]. The first, in particular, has freed the rational part of humanity from its bogeys by an exact investigation of the mechanical laws of motion arising from the coming together of atoms through the Eternal Something-or-Other [*der Ewige Ungefähr*], and by banishing all spiritual entities from nature, just like his immortal predecessor Epicurus.[27]

Again, like his two fellow Rosicrucians Plumenoek and Chrysophiron, he sees the Rosicrucian order as the upholder of piety and the traditional social order against the onslaughts of the *Aufklärer*:

> As there are opponents of Christ working darkly throughout the world ... it is therefore necessary that there should be Rosicrucians who shine forth through effective teaching and, even more powerfully, through personal example, so as to preserve intact and indissoluble that great and necessary bond between God and his rational creatures, between master and servant, between parents and children, between the state and its subjects, between citizen and citizen, and to oppose the harmful rupture of that bond, which is the aim of all the abominable false teachings that are streaming forth from the free-thinkers who are today so ubiquitous. An organization dangerous to human society, which aims to carry out secret political plans and to recruit important citizens of the state, also knows how to cultivate these important citizens.[28]

The last sentence is undoubtedly a reference to the Illuminati, whose conflict with the Gold- und Rosenkreuz will be discussed in detail shortly.

In the works of the three writers discussed in this chapter we can see the essential ways in which, philosophically, the Gold- und Rosenkreuz stood in opposition to *Aufklärung*. In common with other anti-*Aufklärung* factions, it upheld faith against scepticism, revelation against reason, Christian doctrine against deism or paganism, monarchy and established hierarchy against democracy, tradition and stability against change and progress. In particular, it upheld alchemy and the gnostic, hermetic tradition in which it was rooted, in

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[26] Magister Pianco, *der Rosenkreuzer in seiner Blöße* (Amsterdam, [i.e. Nuremberg, Bauer], 1781).
[27] Phoebron, pp. 108-9.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

opposition not only to the new science but also to the standpoint of many orthodox Christians.

Having examined the Gold- und Rosenkreuz *Weltanschauung*, it would now be instructive to consider an episode which aroused fierce controversy between pro- and anti-*Aufklärung* factions and which provides an example of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz adopting an anti-*Aufklärung* position. The affair centred around a priest of Austrian origin named Johann Josef Gaβner, who, in the years 1774-6 became famous as an exorcist and spiritual healer. He is relevant in the context of this study because of the way in which his cause was supported by Schleiβ von Löwenfeld. Schleiβ's statements on Gaβner are significant since he clearly regarded himself as speaking for the Gold- und Rosenkreuz order. Because of the issues that it raised, the Gaβner controversy is worth examining in some detail.

First, who was Johann Josef Gaβner? In his *Aufbruch zur Romantik*, Hans Graβl gives the essential facts of his life.[29] He was born in 1727, was educated by the Jesuits at Innsbruck and Prague and in 1758 became a parish priest in his native Vorarlberg. Two years later he began to suffer from severe headaches as well as chest and stomach pains. Unable to obtain help from the doctors, he turned to a book on exorcism which told him that illnesses are often caused by the Devil and his minions, but that these must always yield when the name of Jesus Christ is invoked. Gaβner decided to put this to the test, and, after some initially abortive attempts, apparently succeeded in curing himself in the name of Jesus. Eager to apply his newly-discovered gift to others, he began to use the same technique on his parishioners, again with apparent success. His reputation spread rapidly beyond the parish. People travelled increasing distances to see him until eventually they were coming from all over Europe to seek his help. Later he was posted to Ellwangen in the diocese of Augsburg, where the cures continued.

Gaβner's activities soon became a subject of acrimonious debate. On the one hand were those who accepted him as a genuine exorcist and saw his cures as a salutary proof of divine power in an age of increasing scepticism. Those sympathetic to Gaβner included the Swiss pastor Johann Caspar Lavater, a prominent figure of the Counter-*Aufklärung*.[30] On the other hand were those who said that he was either a charlatan or a case of delusion and that his cures were bogus. These people were deeply worried by his enormous popular success because they saw it as a gust of the wind of superstition that made the flame of the *Aufklärung* gutter alarmingly. An attempt was made to explain away his feats in terms of Franz Anton Mesmer's animal magnetism theory

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[29] Hans Graβl, *Aufbruch zur Romantik*, pp. 131-171.
[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 165-171.

that was causing much excitement at the time, and Mesmer himself announced that the exorcist possessed the force of animal magnetism but without realizing it.[31]

Inside the Catholic church as well as outside it, opinions on Gaßner were sharply divided. One of his most tireless opponents was another Catholic priest, Ferdinand von Sterzinger, a champion of enlightened Catholicism, whose efforts finally helped to bring about a papal order in 1776 that placed severe restrictions on Gaßner's work and ended the mass exorcisms.[32] Gaßner's activities were also banned throughout the Habsburg dominions by order of Joseph II.[33]

Ludwig Hammermayer, in an article on Sterzinger, comments as follows about the Gaßner case:

> Basically the case of Gaßner did not have to do with an apparently dubious faith-healer and exorcist, with mass hysteria and contradictory medical diagnoses. What was in fact at stake was nothing less than the future course of natural science in Bavaria and in the Catholic areas of the German-speaking realm. The choice lay between, on the one hand, rationalistic-mechanistic empiricism with its purely natural explanatory criteria, and, on the other hand, the manifold ... esoteric, that is to say, hermetic-alchemical, mystic-spiritual and theosophical currents as they appeared in the new pseudo-masonic fraternities.[34]

This confrontation of world views, represented by the Gaßner case, had already manifested itself in Bavaria in another hotly debated issue, that of witchcraft. The fact that it was as late as 1756 (as Hammermayer reports) that the last witch was burned at the stake in Bavaria is evidence of how seriously the supposed threat of witchcraft was taken in that country, even in the midst of the century of *Aufklärung*. This state of affairs horrified Sterzinger, who in 1766 had delivered a speech to the Bavarian Academy of Sciences in which he had denied the existence of witches who made pacts with the Devil. In this controversy, as well as in the Gaßner case, Schleiß von Löwenfeld had spoken out against Sterzinger.[35]

Bernhard Joseph Schleiß von Löwenfeld was, as mentioned a distinguished physician of Sulzbach in the Upper Palatinate, whose writings include medical treatises as well as works on Rosicrucianism and related subjects. He was, moreover, as has been mentioned, a leading figure in the Gold- und Ro-

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[31] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

[32] See Ludwig Hammermayer, "Ferdinand von Sterzinger (1721-1786)", in *Christenleben im Wandel der Zeit*, edited by Georg Schwaiger, Vol. I *Lebensbilder aus der Geschichte des Bistums Freising* (Munich, Erich Wewel, 1987).

[33] Graßl, p. 154.

[34] Hammermayer, "Sterzinger", p. 324.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 319.

senkreuz order. As Hans Graβl writes: "Recent researchers firmly maintain that ... Schleiβ von Löwenfeld played a considerable, indeed decisive, role in the reforms of the order in 1767 and 1777."[36]
Schleiβ went to Ellwangen and observed Gaβner at work over a period of 15 days during which he maintained that he had witnessed 205 cures.[37]

He subsequently hotly defended Gaβner and maintained that the cures happened not through magia naturalis as Sterzinger believed, but solely through belief in Christ.[38] He declared that the only reason why Gaβner had been attacked was because he exposed the inadequacy of rationalistic theology.[39]

Schleiβ's works in defence of Gaβner include one entitled *Unterricht für diejenigen welche in ihren körperlichen Anliegenheiten, bey dem hochwürdigen Herrn Johann Joseph Gaβner ... entweder Hülfe zu suchen gedenken, oder selbst schon gesucht und gefunden haben*, whose title page states that it was published at Augsburg in 1775 "with the permission of the Superiors" (mit Erlaubniss der Oberen), indicating that Schleiβ's views on Gaβner were consistent with those of the order or at least that he was eager to present them as being so. In this work Schleiβ poses the question why Gaβner sometimes failed to cure and why he sometimes only partially succeeded. His answer is that Gaβner, as an exorcist, strove only to combat those diseases which stemmed, either wholly or in part, from the influence of the Devil. Thus, if the illness is purely natural the exorcism will not work. Furthermore there are illnesses that are basically natural but which the Devil has intensified. In such cases a partial cure was possible.[40] He writes of the cunning of Satan, who is always trying to corrupt human beings and lead them astray, and of the fallen angels who assist Satan in his work. Many illnesses he sees as being due to the work of these creatures.[41] In the same year Schleiβ published another work, *Gründlicher Beweis, dass die Art, mit welcher ... Herr Johann Joseph Gaβner die Krankheiten zu heilen pflegt, den evangelischen Grundsätzen und den Gesinnung der allerersten Kirche ganz gleichförmig sey*, also issued at Augsburg "with the permission of the Superiors", emphasizing again his eagerness to present himself as speaking for the order.

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[36] Graβl, p. 7.

[37] B.J. Schleiβ von Löwenfeld, *Zweifelsfragen an Herrn Dr. Semler zu Halle über die Sammlungen der Gaβnerischen Geisterbeschwörungen* (Sulzbach, 1776), quoted by Grassl, p. 149.

[38] Graβl, pp. 146-7.

[39] *Zweifelsfragen*, quoted by Grassl, p. 147.

[40] B.J. Schleiβ von Löwenfeld, *Unterricht für diejenigen welche in ihren körperlichen Anliegenheiten, bey dem hochwürdigen Herrn Johann Joseph Gaβner ... entweder Hülfe zu suchen gedenken, oder selbst schon gesucht und gefunden haben* (Augsburg, 1775), pp. 6-8.

[41] *Ibid.*, pp. 56-61.

Among those hostile to Gaßner was the author of the foreword to a 1775 re-issue of Christian Thomasius's *Streitschrift von dem Verbrechen der Zauber- und Hexerey*, originally published in 1701. He writes:

> In the present century, when almost all the sciences stand at such a refined level that they seem almost to have been taken to their highest point, one would hardly believe that the most fatuous prejudice and the crassest superstition should once more raise their heads. ...
>
> In natural science so many former mysteries have been unlocked that, in order to explain this or that phenomenon we no longer need to have recourse ... to the unknown and hidden powers of nature.

Witchraft, demonic possession, exorcism ... these concepts were anathema to the men of the *Aufklärung*. To accept them meant to deny the Cartesian view of the universe and to admit that supernatural forces, good and evil were vying with one another in the souls and bodies of human beings. Belief in Gaßner's demons was as repulsive as belief in witchcraft. It went against the whole optimistic tenor of *Aufklärung* thought, which, as we have seen, held that human beings can raise themselves to their rightful state of happiness by pursuing policies based on understanding, observation and reason.

The men of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, on the other hand, had, as we have seen, a world view that directly denied the Cartesian philosophy. They believed that the whole material world was deeply imbued with spiritual forces and that human beings were in a benighted state from which they could be rescued only by divine aid. It is not surprising, therefore, to find a leading member of the order arguing for the existence of witchcraft and defending Gaßner's cures. At the same time, it is clear that Gaßner was an embarrassment to the Church authorities as well as a bête noire to the *Aufklärer*. The Gaßner case is therefore, one example of an occasion when the neo-Rosicrucians, while playing an anti-*Aufklärung* role, did so in a way that did not correspond to the official stance of the Church.

The Gaßner case was followed by another *cause célèbre* in which the Gold- und Rosenkreuz played a role. In the same year as the American Revolution, 1776, there came into being an organization that was, in its aims and doctrines, the polar opposite of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. This was the Order of the Illuminati, which represented the extreme radical wing of the *Aufklärung*. It originated in Bavaria and was the creation of a 28-year-old professor of canon law and practical philosophy at Ingolstadt named Adam Weishaupt (1748-1830). During the early 1780s the conflict between these two orders symbolized for many the whole confrontation between the *Aufklärung* and its opponents.

The emergence of the Illuminati must be seen in the context of the *Aufklärung* as a whole. We have seen (Chapter 1) how a radical strain in the *Aufklärung*, which at first collaborated with enlightened despostism, gradually be-

came impatient for more profound and far-reaching changes than the enlightened despots were willing or able to bring about. The frustration of the *Aufklärer* became particularly acute in areas where enlightened despotism was replaced by conservative rule, as was the case in Bavaria when the Elector Maximilian III Joseph (1745-1777) was succeeded by Karl Theodor. Maximilian III Joseph was by the standards of the day a highly enlightened monarch, who carried out reforms in many fields. Under his reign the great Bavarian Academy of Sciences was founded (1759), literature and science were encouraged, educational reforms were introduced, the Church was brought under greater state control, and the Jesuit Order, which had monopolized the schools, was dissolved in 1773. This last measure, however, did not have the results that the *Aufklärer* hoped for. Because of an extreme shortage of qualified teachers most of the Jesuit teaching staff retained their positions. Furthermore the Jesuits, who were seen by the *Aufklärer* as the arch-enemy, continued to exert an influence at the court. The situation worsened for the *Aufklärer* when Karl Theodor succeeded to the throne in 1777. Although previously enjoying an reputation for enlightenment, Karl Theodor almost immediately brought about a return to narrow-minded clericalism.[42]

In these circumstance the friends of the *Aufklärung* began to feel that Bavaria was in the grip of an anti-*Aufklärung* conspiracy made up of ex-Jesuits, Rosicrucians and other conservatives. This impression was strenthened when the ex-Jesuit Ignaz Frank became Karl Theodor's confessor and influential adviser. Frank was also, according to a number of sources, the leader of the Munich circle of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. One piece of evidence for this is a communication sent by the Groβ-Priorat to Wöllner in 1785, in which Frank is mentioned by name.[43] This document will be quoted later in this chapter. It is also significant, as Antoine Faivre points out, that the anti-masonic measures, taken in Bavaria in the wake of the eventual suppression of the Illuminati, hardly touched the Gold- und Rosenkreuz.[44]

This atmosphere of thwarted *Aufklärung* hopes in Bavaria must have helped Weishaupt to recruit people to his organization, which was a skilful combination of various elements. Two years before its foundation, Weishaupt had first heard about Freemasonry and had set about reading all he could find

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[42] Richard van Dülmen, *Der Geheimbund der Illuminaten* (Stuttgart, Frommann-Holzboog, 1977), pp. 23-4, and Frederick Hertz, *The Development of the German Public Mind*, Vol. II (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1962), pp. 339-40.

[43] C.C.F.W. von Nettelbladt, *Geschichte Freimaurerischer Systeme in England, Frankreich und Deutschland* (Berlin, Mittler, 1879; reprint Walluf bei Wiesbaden, Martin Sandig, 1972), pp. 546-7.

[44] Antoine Faivre, *Eckartshausen et la théosophie chrétienne* (Paris, Klincksieck, 1969), p. 134.

on the subject. Impressed with what he read, and inspired by the writings of *Aufklärung* philosophers, he had conceived the plan of founding a secret society with radically enlightened aims. The final impulse to put this plan into effect came when the news reached him that a Rosicrucian circle in Burghausen was attempting to recruit members from among the students of Ingolstadt. Weishaupt, repelled by the alchemical and other "follies" of the Rosicrucians, began to solicit members for his own society.[45] Significantly, therefore, enmity towards the Gold- und Rosenkreuz played a part in the very inception of the Illuminati. A desire to combat the influence of the ex-Jesuits was also undoubtedly an important motive for Weishaupt, although the Jesuit order, with its impressive organization and discipline, was one of the models for the Illuminati.

The order began by recruiting students from the University of Ingolstadt. For the first two years of its existence it remained a local affair with no coherent organizational system or clear set of aims. By March 1778 it still had only 19 members.[46] In mid-1778 or early 1779, however, the order entered a new phase when it was given a constitution, a firm structure and a grade system. At first it had been unconnected with Freemasonry, but in 1777 Weishaupt joined the Munich masonic lodge Zur Behutsamkeit, affiliated to the Strict Observance, possibly under the influence of his former pupil Franz Xaver von Zwackh, an early recruit to the order who became one of its most important members. The Illuminati used Freemasonry as a both a recruiting ground and a vehicle for extending itself. By 1782 it is estimated to have attained a membership of some 300, among them such distinguished names as Sonnenfels and Goethe.[47]

The aims of the Illuminati were inseparably bound up with Weishaupt's own philosophy. Weishaupt was a man profoundly steeped in the ideas of the Enlightenment, who sincerely held the optimistic view that through education, the progress of science, the pursuit of reason and the rejection of superstition and obscurantism, it would be possible to erect a truly free, happy and egalitarian society by peaceful means. Greatly influenced by the French *philosophes*, he strongly admired the scientific writings of Holbach and Helvétius and the social doctrines of such writers as Rousseau, Morelly and Mably.[48] To appreciate how profoundly Weishaupt's views differed from those typical of the Gold- und Rosenkreuzer, it is necessary to cite only a few examples from his writings, many of which were published in a collection, entitled the *Original-*

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[45] Van Dülmen, *Der Geheimbund der Illuminaten*, p. 27.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 31.
[47] J.M. Roberts, *The Mythology of the Secret Societies* (London, Secker and Warburg, 1972).
[48] Roberts, pp. 119-121.

schriften, issued in Bavaria after the suppression of his order.[49] One of these documents is a historical essay,[50] in which Weishaupt writes:

> From every satisfied need there arises a new one, and the history of human beings is the history of their needs, one arising from the other. And this history, this origin and development of needs is the history of the perfection of the whole race; for it is from these that there follow culture, refinement of mores and development of the dormant powers of the mind.

Weishaupt goes on to outline a view of human history that clearly owes much to Rousseau. Humankind, he says, develops from a stage of happy savagery

> in which the only social organization is the family and the only needs are easily satisfied ones—hunger and thirst, protection from inclement weather, a wife and rest after exhaustion—a state of affairs in which man's two supreme benefits, equality and freedom, are enjoyed to the full.

Then comes a deterioration, with power-seeking, division into nations and subjection of some people by others. "Being human began to take second place to being the citizen of a nation, and nationalism took the place of philanthropy." Thus humankind comes from a state of blissful equality and freedom and will gradually return to it. *Aufklärung* is part of this process of return. "Whoever spreads *Aufklärung* creates at the same time mutual security, and a state of general *Aufklärung* and security make princes and states unnecessary."

What Weishaupt presents here is a totally secular version of the fall and redemption theme, which would have appeared deeply blasphemous to someone who laid great emphasis, as the Gold- und Rosenkreuz did, on the teaching that all human beings are living in a state of darkness and can attain salvation only through divine aid. Even Jesus Christ plays a secular role in Weishaupt's scheme. To Weishaupt, Jesus was "the liberator of his people and of the whole of humankind", but not in any divine sense. Jesus, appearing in the world at a time of corruption and slavery, "taught to his people the doctrine of reason". In order to make this doctrine more effective, he cloaked it in a religious form "and cleverly linked it with the ruling religion and customs of his people in which he concealed the inner essence of his teaching."

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[49] *Einige Originalschriften des Illuminatenordens welche bey dem gewesenen Regierungsrath Zwack durch vorgenommene Hausvisitation zu Landshut den 11 und 12 Oktober 1786 vorgefunden wurden* (Munich, Anton Franz, 1787). A sequel was published shortly afterwards—see note 50.

[50] *Nachtrag von weiteren Orginalschriften welche die Illuminatensekte überhaupt, sonderbar aber den Stiften derselben Adam Weishaupt, gewesenen Professor zu Ingolstadt betreffen* (Munich, 1787), pp. 53ff.

The style of Weishaupt's order was, on the face of it, at variance with his *Aufklärung* philosophy. Based to a large extent on Freemasonry and the Jesuit order, it was highly secret and hierarchical. But for Weishaupt this was a means to an end. He needed the secrecy to protect the order, and the masonic style of hierarchy and ritual was a way of introducing the initiate gradually to the order's teachings in an impressive way. It is unlikely, however, that Weishaupt would have devised such an elaborate system had he not possessed a certain penchant for ritual and mystique for their own sake.

In structure and methods of working the Illuminati were as complex and elaborate as any of the more colourful masonic orders.[51] Essential to the order was an intensive programme of study of ancient and modern thinkers with the intention of educating the initiate, schooling him in the use of reason and critical thinking and guiding him towards a true understanding of man's nature so that in due course he could participate in the real work of the Illuminati. The order's true aims, however, were revealed only gradually, as the initiate progressed up the ladder, which essentially consisted of three grades. First came the grade of Novize, whose syllabus included the great French moralists of the 17th century, the writings of Adam Smith and such edifying works as Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*, Goethe's *Egmont* and Wieland's *Agathon*. The second grade, that of Minerval, involved a study of classical writers such as Seneca, Epictetus, Plutarch and Sallust. Only when he came to the third grade, that of Illuminatus was the initiate introduced to the atheistic and materialistic writings of Holbach and Helvétius. At the head of the order was a highly secret group called the Areopagus. Not until a member was admitted to this circle were the full subversive and revolutionary aims of the order revealed to him. Because the order had the practical aim of infiltrating its members into positions of influence in order to bring about a transformation of society, it preferred to recruit people of wealth, social standing and ability.

Various code names were employed by the Illuminati. Weishaupt, for example, was known as Spartacus in the order, while Zwackh was Cato. Munich was called Athens, Ingolstadt was Eleusis, Ravensburg was Sparta, and Vienna was Rome. The choice of names reflects Weishaupt's admiration for classical antiquity.

A new element came into the order with the advent of Adolf, Freiherr von Knigge (1752-1796), who was recruited to the Illuminati in 1779 after having toyed with Rosicrucianism. Knigge, as already mentioned (Chapter 3), was

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[51] My account of the organization, procedures and general history of the order is based on the following: J.M. Roberts, *The Mythology of the Secret Societies*; Richard van Dülmen, *Der Geheimbund der Illuminaten*; Ludwig Hammermayer, "Höhepunkt und Wandel: die Illuminaten" in Max Spindler (ed.), *Handbuch der bayerischen Geschichte*, Vol. IV (Munich, 1988), pp. 1269-70; and Hans Graßl, *Aufbruch zur Romantik* (Munich, Beck, 1968).

one of those ambivalent figures who were attracted by both the egalitarian and the mystical wings of Freemasonry.[52] Having rapidly become a leading member of the order, with the code name of Philo, Knigge introduced significant changes. Weishaupt's personal control of the order was replaced by an oligarchy of Areopagites, the link with Freemasonry was strengthened by creating an obligatory masonic stage in the upward progess of a member, and a mystical ingredient was introduced into the grade system. Knigge's efforts helped greatly to increase the membership of the Illuminati in the early 1780's, but his esoteric leanings led to a clash with Weishaupt, and in 1784 he left the order.

We have seen how the Illuminati and the Gold- und Rosenkreuz were diametrically opposed in their essential outlook and aims, and the hostility between them is frequently revealed in their writings. In the *Originalschriften*, for example, there is a passage in which the author, possibly Weishaupt himself, deplores the growth of the French and Swedish high-degree masonic systems. He then goes on as follows:

> Meanwhile there had become known in Germany Rosicrucians of various varieties, who attempted to take over the wayward branches of Freemasonry. ... From the *Compass der Weisen*, the Rosicrucian sayings and other writings of this ilk, it is possible to acquaint oneself more closely with this society, and anyone who is moved thereby to have himself accepted into the order does so at his own risk and will see what he has learnt at the end of six years. Now something about Rosicrucianism in general! It is now well enough known among enlightened men that Rosicrucians have never really existed. Rather, everything contained in the *Fama* and the *Allgemeine Reformation der Welt* is a fine allegory composed by Valentin Andreae and that subsequently an attempt was made, partly by charlatans (and Jesuits), partly by fanatics [*Schwärmer*], to realise this dream. No one who is conversant with philosophical history is unfamiliar with this cobbled together system of Hermetic philosophy.
>
> From the writings of the German Rosicrucians, however, it is abundantly clear that these good people have not even rightly understood the sense and spirit of this system, and it is no longer any secret that the aforementioned society, which includes very worthy men, has been cunningly led astray by a number of ignorant charlatans ... who wish to bring all masonic lodges under their control.[53]

The writer goes on to lament the "general human inclination towards the miraculous and especially the passion for alchemy, which has become so widespread in Germany in the past two centuries and of which the Jesuits have made such good use." Thanks to the German Rosicrucians, this phenomenon has taken such deep root "that a large number of mediocre people have been

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[52] Lennhoff and Posner, *Internationales Freimaurer-Lexikon*, p. 844.

[53] *Originalschriften*, pp. 148-9.

inspired to chase after speculative fantasies ... and every clear source of physical, chemical and mathematical knowledge is being muddied by these ignoramuses".[54]

The struggle against the Gold- und Rosenkreuz was not merely a theoretical matter, but was of constant practical concern to the Illuminati, as is made clear by the references to the Rosicrucians in the *Originalschriften*. Early in the volume, for example is the following statement: "Not only have the R.C. been hampered in their recruitement, but their name has been made contemptible."[55] In a letter, Philo (Knigge) writes: "Please beware of the Freemasons in Rome [Vienna]. The place is full of R+."[56] And in another letter he writes about creating "a firm institution against the German R+, who are daily becoming more dangerous to us".[57]

The Rosicrucians, for their part (with certain notable exceptions, as will be seen), were equally implacable in their hostility towards the Illuminati. Their campaign against Weishaupt's organization began in 1783. Steiner mentions a decree against the Illuminati issued in the spring of that year, which is recorded in the minutes of the Kassel Rosicrucian circle.[58] This is almost certainly the same decree that was sent to Maltzahn on 17 March 1783 and which is preserved in the Kloß collection at the Hague.[59] The copy in the Kloß collection is headed "from the Vice Generalats Secretariat" and begins by drawing attention to a correspondence which had evidently come into the hands of the Rosicrucians from "a sect calling themselves Minervalen" whose first grade is known as the Illuminati. The correspondence includes letters to "Dr Barth" (presumably Karl Friedrich Bahrdt, the Protestant theologian, freemason and radical *Aufklärer*, who later founded the *Aufklärung* organization

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[54] *Ibid.*, p. 149.
[55] *Ibid.*, p. 8.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 110.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 122.
[58] Gerhard Steiner, *Freimaurer und Rosenkreuzer*, p. 110.
[59] Kloß Collection, Grand Lodge of the Netherlands, The Hague, 1198.193.A9. The original reads:
"Gleichwie ... diese Sekte wie ihr Vater Lucifer, welcher immer nur der Affe seines Schöpfers sein will, unseren heiligen O. in einem oder anderen Dingen nachäffet habe aber der seelenmörderische Absicht sich zu ihren Hauptzweck gesetzt habe das seligmachende Glaubenslicht, unsern Herrn und Welterlöser wie sein ewig bleibend heilwirkendes Wort den ohnedem schon viel zu sehr verfinsterten Menschenkindern völlig zu entreißen ... so ist selbige allen O.directionen durch die geheime O.s Circulaturen bekannt zu machen und alle BBr. sind durch ihre Directores vor selbigen zu warnen, auch nachdruksamst anweisen zu lassen, über die Glieder dieser unchristlichen folglich auch unmaurerischen Sekte offne Augen zu halten, und mit genauer Beobachtung unserer regelmässigen Verschlossenheit ihren Gott äußerst verhaßten Bestreben durch seine segensreiche Mitwirkungsgnade nach aller Geistes Kraft in der Liebe Jesu und seiner Gemeinde willen standhaft zu widerstreben."
N.B. The clumsy German in which this is written is typical of many Gold- und Rosenkreuz documents.

known as the Deutsche Union) urging him to spread "Socinianism and especially deism". This sect has been aping the Rosicrucian order, just as "their father Lucifer always wants to be the ape of his Creator". The text goes on to denounce the Illuminati as follows:

> This sect ... has set itself the soul-destroying task of tearing away the light of belief and our Lord and World-Redeemer as well as his eternally healing Word from the already all too benighted children of humanity. ... Therefore the said sect is to be made known to all directors of the Order through secret Order-circulars, and all brothers are to be warned by their directors and emphatically instructed to keep their eyes open for the members of this un-Christian and therefore un-masonic sect and, with scrupulous observance of our customary secrecy, to resist their endeavours, so utterly hateful to God, with his beneficent and gracious aid, with all their inner strength in the love of Jesus and for the sake of his community.

Subsequent references in the correspondence of Gold- und Rosenkreuz members show how seriously the menace of the Illuminati was taken. Geheimrat von Haak, for example, whom we have already encountered as a member of the Kassel Rosicrucian circle, wrote on 30 August 1783 to a fellow member named Schütz, saying of the Illuminati: "These people seem to me to be like a resurrected Jesuit order, which could have dangerous consequences for the future and cause the whole of Masonry to suffer."[60] The comparison with the Jesuits is interesting, since the Rosicrucians themselves were often accused of being a cover for the Jesuit order. Haak's negative reference to the Jesuits is one piece of evidence that weighs against such an accusation.

It is difficult to determine how great a part the Rosicrucians played in the downfall of the Illuminati, but there is evidence that they at least contributed to it, and possibly their contribution was a key one. The circumstances of the downfall[61] were connected with the ambition of Joseph II to acquire Bavaria for the Habsburgs and to give Belgium to Karl Theodor in exchange. This scheme was opposed by the Duchess Maria Anna, a member of the electoral house and a fervent Bavarian patriot. The Illuminati, favouring the plan, tried to induce her private secretary Utzschneider, a member of the Illuminati, to steal some letters regarding the exchange, which she had received from Frederick the Great. Instead Utzschneider left the order and revealed the scheme to the Duchess, who in turn informed Karl Theodor, despite their difference of opinion over the exchange. At first the Elector took no action against the Illuminati, but he became seriously alarmed when he was told by his archivist that certain documents had disappeared from his secret archives and that the Illuminati were to blame. The archivist in question was the mystical writer

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[60] Kloß Collection 473.191.D11.

[61] See note 51 for sources.

Karl von Eckartshausen, himself a former member of the Illuminati but now an enemy of the sect, who was to become a leading anti-*Aufklärung* spokesman. It is tempting to speculate that Eckartshausen, a man of Christian theosophical outlook and deeply interested in alchemy, was a member of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. Unfortunately no evidence has yet been discovered to support this, though it is safe to say that Eckartshausen's outlook was very close to that of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. He almost certainly knew members of the order and would very likely have considered himself their ally.[62]

On 23 June 1784 Karl Theodor issued an edict against secret societies, without mentioning the Illuminati by name. A second edict, however, issued on 2 March 1785 specifically condemned all "lodges of the so-called freemasons and Illuminati in our country as traitorous and hostile to religion".[63] Other rulers also acted against the Illuminati. Duke Karl Eugen of Württemberg did so in 1784, and Joseph II of Austria issued his *Freimaurerpatent* in 1785 banning the Illuminati and restricting the activities of the regular masonic lodges.

The Rosicrucians also kept up their campaign against Weishaupt's sect. C.C.F.W. von Nettelbladt, in his *Geschichte Freimaurerischer Systeme* relates that on 1 September 1785 the Groβ-Priorat of the Order issued a communication to Wöllner, as head of the Berlin directorate, part of which, as Nettelbladt reproduces it, reads as follows:

> How things currently stand with regard to the sect of the illuminati in Bavaria, and how they are likely to develop, is clarified in a report sent to us by our Circle Director in Munich, which we are informing you about first, as it was you (Ophiron) who first sent us the list of members of the sect which occasioned us to send a most solemn order to the said Circle Director requesting that, with appropriate secrecy for his own protection, he oppose the sect with all the powers at his command. God has blessed his hard and dangerous struggle with success. ... His—the Circle Director Father Frank's—report reads as follows: The Judgement Day of the Illuminati-System in Bavaria seems to be approaching. ... I have worked strenuously in an effort to destroy them for the preservation of the religion of Jesus, for the benefit of my Fatherland and of youth and for the good of the Order.[64]

Frank goes on to describe how various Illuminati have been expelled from their jobs and from the University of Ingolstadt and how a country-wide purge

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[62] The best study of Eckartshausen is Antoine Faivre, *Eckartshausen et la théosophie chrétienne* (see note 3).

[63] Hammermayer, source quoted in note 51, p 1273.

[64] C.C.F.W. von Nettelbladt, *Geschichte freimaurerischer Systeme*, p. 546. Nettelbladt, who appears to have had access to an abundance of original manuscripts, is unfortunately very vague about his sources, and does not give a reference for this document. It must therefore be treated with suitable caution, although Professor Ludwig Hammermayer tells me that he is disinclined to treat it as bogus.

of the Illuminati has been instituted. He expresses his satisfaction that, despite the disrepute into which Masonry has been brought, "our sacred Order" can still stand upright. "We go about secretly but boldly among the fallen bogus brethren, set a good example according to the commands of our sovereign and at present hold no assemblies, but are assured of his favour."[65] The Rosicrucians, then, according to this report, enjoyed special protection from the Elector.

After that events moved with increasing force against the Illuminati. In Bavaria many members of the order were arrested, and in the autumn of 1786 the Landshut residence of Zwackh (who had fled Bavaria) was searched, revealing a mass of documents which were published the following year with the intention of further discrediting the Illuminati. Meanwhile Weishaupt, having been forced out of his chair at the University of Ingolstadt, had fled Bavaria and taken refuge first at Nuremberg and then at Regensburg, thus escaping arrest. Finally he settled at Gotha under the protection of the Duke, Ernst II of Saxe-Gotha, from which haven he published a series of writings in defence of the Illuminati. Although the order had essentially collapsed by the end of 1787 at the latest, it continued to be seen as a bogey by the conservatives, especially after the French Revolution.

We have seen how the Gold- und Rosenkreuz were profoundly inimical to the Illuminati, but the question arises: to what extent did the Rosicrucians actively contribute to the downfall of Weishaupt's order? The decree already quoted, from the "Vice Generalats Secretariat" of the order, made it clear that members of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz were expected energetically to combat the Illuminati. Thus we would expect to find influential Rosicrucians using their positions to fulfil this injunction, and indeed we find an example of this (if Nettelbladt's source is to be relied upon) in the action of Wöllner, the powerful Rosicrucian chief minister of Frederick William II of Prussia, in sending a list of Illuminati to Ignaz Frank.[66] Frank, as has been indicated, then evidently used his own influence to combat the Illuminati, following the instructions of his Rosicrucian superiors. The existence of a concerted Rosicrucian campaign against the Illuminati is further supported by a letter from the prominent Austrian freemason, *Aufklärung* figure and Illuminatus, Ignaz von Born, written to his fellow mason, Friedrich Münter, on 22 September 1785, in which Born writes: "What you do not know, however, is that the Fratres

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[65] *Ibid.*, p. 547.

[66] Eugen Lennhoff, *Politische Geheimbünde in Völkergeschehen* (Berlin, 1962), pp.62ff.

R.C. have stirred up so much hullaballoo against the Ill. that we have had to suspend our work for a time."[67]

The spreading of the Iluminati scare to Austria and the issue of the *Freimaurerpatent* caused great anxiety and dissension in the world of Austrian Freemasonry. One result was to create an enmity between the former friends Born and Sonnenfels, with Born accusing Sonnenfels of being a betrayer of the Illuminati because of his co-operation in the policy of suppressing the order, an accusation quoted by Münter in a letter of August 1786.[68] Edith Rosenstrauch-Königsberg speculates that Sonnenfels may have acted out of loyalty to his long-time patron and ally, Count Dietrichstein, who was Grand Master of the Austrian lodges and reportedly a Rosicrucian—both Münter and Forster describe him as such.[69] It is likely, therefore, that Dietrichstein himself was one of the "Fratres R.C." to whom Born refers, and indeed probably played a leading part in the harassment of the Austrian Illuminati.

In summing up, it is fairly clear that prominent members of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz played a significant role in combating the Illuminati through propaganda and political action and in doing so struck a significant blow against the radical *Aufklärung*.

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[67] Edith Rosenstrauch-Königsberg, *Freimaurer, Illuminat, Weltbürger: Friedrich Münters Reisen und Briefe in ihren europäischen Bezügen* (Berlin, Ulrich Camen, 1984), p. 76. She reproduces the quotation as follows: "Sie wisssen aber nicht, daß die Fratres R<osen> C<reuzer> so viel Lermen gegen die Ill<uminaten> erhoben haben, daß wir auf einige Zeit unsre Arbeiten einstellen mußten."

[68] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A ROSICRUCIAN ON THE PRUSSIAN THRONE

We now come to the episode that has, more than anything else, branded the Gold- und Rosenkreuz in the eyes of posterity as an anti-*Aufklärung* force, namely its period of influence at the court of King Frederick William II of Prussia. This episode has often been alluded to, but in order to weigh its significance in the context of this study it will be necessary to re-examine it in some detail.

There has rarely been a greater contrast between two successive rulers than that between Frederick the Great and his nephew and successor Frederick William II. The former has gone down in history as a formidable combination of *philosophe* and Spartan war-lord, who turned Prussia into one of the greatest powers in Europe and at the same time made it the leading example of enlightened despotism. The latter has been dismissed as a weak, suggestible libertine whose reign was marked by muddle-headedness and reaction. In particular he is reviled for his religious policy, which is seen as a reversal of the toleration that had prevailed under his uncle, a policy in which the Gold- und Rosenkreuz order is seen to have played an important role, since the King was a member of the order, as were his two leading advisers, Wöllner and Bischoffswerder.

First a word should be said about the character of Frederick William II himself, since it was an important factor in the events in question.[1] Accounts of him concur in describing him as a man of gracious manners, personal charm and a stately, if increasingly portly, physique. He was fond of the arts, was patron to composers such as Beethoven and Mozart and kept a private orchestra with a European reputation. As a princeling of some minor Ruritania he might have been fondly remembered as a cultured if eccentric ruler. But he was not equipped to take charge of the Prussia shaped by Frederick the Great.

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[1] Surprisingly, there is no substantial study of Frederick William II and his era, although W.M. Freiherr von Bissing's short biography, *Friedrich Wilhelm II. König von Preußen* (Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 1967) is useful as an outline of his life and reign. See also the following: Gilbert Stanhope, *A Mystic on the Prussian Throne* (London, 1912); Friedrich Paulig, *Friedrich Wilhelm II, König von Preußen* (Frankfurt-an-der-Oder, 1895); Erich Bleich, *Der Hof des Königs Friedrich Wilhelm II und des Königs Friedrich Wilhelm III* (Berlin, 1914); and the entry by von Hartmann in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (1878), pp. 685-700; and Epstein's lucid treatment of Frederick William's reign in *The Genesis of German Conservatism*, pp. 352-393. For other sources, see the works listed in the notes below.

Weakness and indecisiveness of character were compounded by lack of experience, for Frederick had neglected his nephew's education and disdainfully refused to give him any steady reponsibilities that might have prepared him for kingship.

His most remarkable quality was his appetite for promiscuity. His first marriage (1765-69) ended in divorce after a scandal involving both parties. The second (1769) endured but did not prevent his taking as a mistress Wilhelmine Enke, the daughter of a trumpet-blower, who was technically married to a royal valet named Rietz and was later given the title of Countess von Lichtenau. Even after ascending the throne in 1786 (and despite an outward zeal for religion and morality) he remained incorrigible, contracting two successive bigamous marriages, first with the Countess von Voss, which ended with her death in 1789, the second with the Countess von Dönhoff, which was cut short when she fell foul of the still powerful Wilhelmine and was banished from court. When Friedrich Wilhelm was on his deathbed in 1797 Wilhelmine proved her loyalty by remaining at his side, rather than fleeing the country as she had been advised to do. When the dead king's son ascended the throne one of the first things he did was to have Wilhelmine arrested and interrogated. Nothing untoward was found in her record, and she was released, but her deposition was to contain some interesting revelations, which will be alluded to later, concerning the influence of Frederick William's Rosicrucian advisers.

The story of Friedrich Wilhelm's involvement with Rosicrucianism begins some years before he became King. During the twilight years of Frederick II's reign there was a faction in Prussia which, disenchanted with Frederick's enlightened despotism, began to look forward to the day when the Crown Prince would ascend the throne, a faction which appears to have been closely associated with illuminism, theosophical Masonry, Templarism and (later on) Rosicrucianism and to have concentrated around the figure of Duke Friedrich August of Braunschweig, who has already been mentioned as a key figure in high-degree Masonry (see Chapter 4). Johannes Schultze, in his essay *Die Rosenkreuzer und Friedrich Wilhelm II*, writes of the Duke as follows:

> We have only scanty information about Friedrich August and his intellectual world, but he appears early on ... to have become inspired with a plan to realise certain practical religious aims and to found a kind of theocracy in Prussia. In view of the attitude of the King, this was only possible if the heir to the throne could be counted on as a willing tool.[2]

According to Schultze, the Crown Prince, after being cultivated for some time by Friedrich August and his circle, was finally won over to the cause during a

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[2] Johannes Schultze, "Die Rosenkreuzer und Friedrich Wilhelm II." in *Forschungen zur brandenburgischen Geschichte* (Berlin, de Gruyter, 1964), p. 245.

meeting between him and the Duke at Schatzlar in Silesia in the autumn of 1778. This is supported by a letter to the Duke from General von Frankenberg (like the Duke, a member of the Strict Observance), written on 13 November of the same year, in which Frankenberg writes: "Through the steps taken with the Prince of Prussia at Schatzlar, Your Grace has commended himself so well to the Superior, who is informed of everything, that it is unnecessary for me to do so, even if I were in such a position."[3]

It is not known who this "Superior" was, but it appears that at this stage the participants were still working under the aegis of the Strict Observance rather than that of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. The latter, however, at about this time began to make its influence felt more strongly in Prussia and soon appears to have replaced the Strict Observance as the vehicle for Friedrich August's esoteric and theocratic aims. At any rate, the next important date in the story is 8 August 1781, when Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm was initiated into the Gold- und Rosenkreuz.[4] It is now time to take a closer look at his two main Rosicrucian mentors, Bischoffswerder and Wöllner.

Johann Rudolf von Bischoffswerder (1741-1803) came of noble Thuringian stock and, like his father, became an army officer. During the last three years of the Seven Years' War he served as a cornet in the Prussian cavalry and after the war became stablemaster and chamberlain to the Duke of Kurland. During the War of Bavarian Succession (1778-79) he served as a major. By that time he was deeply involved in Freemasonry, having joined the Strict Observance in 1764, and had embarked on a mystical and occult quest that was to cause him to fall prey to imposters such as Gugomos and to engage in spiritualistic practices. At the same time he retained a genuine Christian piety. In due course this combination of traits led him to the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, which he joined on Christmas Eve, 1779. Here he hoped to learn the alchemical and other secrets that had eluded him in the other systems. In person, he was tall, distinguished looking and easy of address, yet preserving an aura of mysterious authority. Less fanatical than Wöllner and less ready to use his influence over the King for personal preferment, he never earned the degree of opprobrium that was heaped upon his colleague.[5]

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[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 245-6. Schultze footnotes elsewhere that he had consulted the letters of Friedrich August in the latter's *Nachlaß* at Wolfenbüttel. Presumably this letter came from that source, although he does not footnote it specifically.

[4] Paul Schwartz, *Der erste Kulturkampf in Preußen um Kirche und Schule (1788-98)*, in Monumenta Germaniae Pedagogica, Vol. LVIII (Berlin, Weidmann, 1925), p. 41.

[5] On Bischoffswerder, see: (1) Klaus Epstein, *The Genesis of German Conservatism* (Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 354 ff.; (2) Schultze, *Mitteldeutsche Lebensbilder*, Vol. III (Magdeburg, 1928), pp. 134-55; (3) the entry by Hartmann in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, Vol. II (1875), pp. 675-8; (4) the entry by Count Stolberg-Wernigerode in the *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, Vol. II (1955), p. 266.

Johann Christof Wöllner (1732-1800) was a very different type of man, both in character and in background.[6] He was a contradictory person of great energy and varied abilities who has often too easily been categorized as a straightforward bigot and reactionary. The reality is rather more complicated than that. Wöllner was born at Döberitz in the Mark Brandenburg, where his father was a Lutheran pastor. Despite the relatively humble circumstances of the family, he received a good education and in 1750 went to study theology at the university of Halle. In 1753 he became majordomo to the son of General von Itzenplitz at Groß-Behnitz in the Mark Brandenburg, and two years later, at the unusually young age of 23, he was made preacher at Groß-Behnitz. He later published some of his sermons from this period, such as those in which he celebrated Frederick the Great's victories in the early part of the Seven Years' War.[7] After the death of General Iztenplitz in 1759 he left his pastoral position and took over the tenancy of the estate of Groß-Behnitz from the General's widow. Here he became a keen and successful farmer and began a literary career, writing a series of treatises on agriculture and land reform. Paul Bailleu, author of the entry on Wöllner in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, remarks that in these treatises he shows himself to be "very reformatory in his proposals for the abolition of communes and the bestowing of property on the farmers".[8] He also contributed reviews to Nicolai's *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek*, one of the major organs of the *Aufklärung*.

In 1766 he married the daughter of General Itzenplitz, with the approval of the bride's mother but in defiance of the class barriers of the time. Certain members of the family who objected to the match persuaded Frederick the Great to forbid it. But it was too late to prevent the marriage, which had already been consummated by the time the royal emissary arrived. Instead the young bride was taken to Berlin and kept under house arrest for a month while an investigation was carried out to see if Wöllner had won her hand by improper pressure. No evidence for this was found, and the marriage was accepted, but her inheritance was placed under embargo by the state until Frederick's death. A request to raise Wöllner to the nobility was refused by the King, who declared: "Der Wöllner ist ein betriegerischer und intriganter Pfaffe [Wöllner is a deceitful and scheming parson]."[9] Small wonder that Wöllner nourished a lasting dislike of Frederick the Great and of of the snobbish ways of the Prussian nobility.

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6 For biographical details on Wöllner, see: (1) Schwartz, *Der erste Kulturkampf in Preußen*, pp. 36 ff.; (2) the entry by Paul Bailleu in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, Vol. XLIV (1898), pp. 148-58.

7 J.C. Wöllner, *Predigten* (first published 1761, reissued at Berlin "in Commission der Buchhandlung der Königlichen Realschule," 1789).

8 Bailleu in *ADB*, p. 149.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 150.

Despite this episode Wöllner's career advanced rapidly. Frederick, notwithstanding his dismissive words about Wöllner, approved his appointment in 1767 to a commission investigating the question of the communes. Two years later he was made a rent-collector and administrator for Prince Henry of Prussia at a salary of 520 Taler a year, a post which he held until 1786.

Meanwhile Wöllner was pursuing, with his customary ambition and dedication, a career in Freemasonry, to which he had been initiated in 1765, rapidly rising to high office through his energy and oratorical skills. For a long time, however, he did not find in Masonry the occult secrets nor the charters of ancient authority that he was seeking. He passed through the Strict Observance unsatisfied and dallied with Gugomos before realising that he was fraudulent. But in January 1779 he joined the increasingly vigorous Gold- und Rosenkreuz order, possibly under the influence of Duke Friedrich August of Braunschweig, taking the name of Heliconus and soon rising to be Oberhauptdirektor for northern Germany, in charge of 26 circles with a total of some 234 members (assuming the standard nine members per circle). He had found the home that he had been looking for, and, despite some frustrations and disappointments in the order, he remained a dedicated Rosicrucian.

On 8 August 1781 occurred the event that was to prove so fateful for the Rosicrucian order and for Prussia. This was the initiation of Crown Prince Frederick William into the brotherhood in the presence of three members: Duke Friedrich August (known as Rufus in the order), Bischoffswerder (Farferus) and Wöllner (Heliconus).[10]

The theory has already been mentioned that Duke Friedrich August and his circle had been cultivating the Prince as a part of a plan to create a theocracy in Prussia. If this is true, then the initiation must have been seen by the three presiding brethren as a major step forward in their strategy. The existence of such a plan is as yet impossible to prove conclusively, but there is evidence that right from the start there was an intention to shape Frederick William into a Prince who would rule according to the principles that were dear to the Rosicrucian order. This evidence lies partly in the texts of four orations, two given at the Prince's initiation and the other two at subsequent ceremonies, all four of which were carefully preserved by Frederick William until his death. These orations are summarized by Schwartz in his *Der erste Kulturkampf in Preußen*.[11]

Of the two orations given at the initiation, one by Bischoffswerder, the other by Wöllner, the latter is the more significant. In it Wöllner emphasized the importance of the Prince's entry into the order, whose task was to honour God and strive for the true happiness of mankind, and which had been fa-

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[10] Schwartz, *Der erste Kulturkampf in Preußen*, p. 41.
[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 41-3.

voured with certain signs of grace. He eulogized the leaders of the order as God's chosen friends, who had long since distanced themselves from all sin and had attained once again to the image of the Most High. Hence they possessed clarity of understanding, sanctity of will and bodies without ailment. They saw clearly into the innermost depths of nature, which gladly obeyed their commands. As a united group, they possessed all the marvellous powers of the Prophets and Apostles. Wöllner reminded the Prince of the occasion at Schatzlar when he saw the light and was called. Because of this the order valued him highly, and as a token of this it had chosen a high-ranking member (i.e. Bischoffswerder) to be his guide in the brotherhood. The Prince was enjoined to be obedient to his guide, whose advice was always the advice of God, for God acted directly through the order for the good of its members. Finally Wöllner emphasized the importance of the oath that the Prince had taken. No power on earth could dissolve the bond forged by this oath, and by virtue of it the Prince could rely on the strength of the order in any just war.

Ten months later, when Frederick William was raised to the next degree, Wöllner delivered another oration. This time he impressed upon the Prince the powers that would be at his command when he eventually became king if by then he had attained the degree of Magus. These powers included being able to read infallibly the character of anyone occupying an important office, so that he could weed out the unworthy ones and gather only virtuous ones around him. He would be able to spy into the secrets of foreign governments and to render their schemes idle before they could be put into effect. In war he would be victorious, and he would be able to distinguish the true from the false religion.

More specific in its injunctions regarding the future King's policies was the speech delivered by Wöllner when Frederick William was raised to a yet higher degree (the date is not recorded). This day, Wöllner declared, was more important than his coronation would be. Lofty tasks awaited him when he became King. The Christian piety of his grandfather Frederick William I was to be his model. If this piety had not been so deeply imprinted on Prussia the outcome of the Seven Years' War would not have been so fortunate. The immorality and impiety of the subsequent period was a result of the so-called enlightened religion. This was where the future ruler would have to intervene and stem the tide, especially as the high Superiors had warned that a highly important epoch in the world's history was approaching with gigantic strides. When he had attained the highest rungs of the order the Prince would be made personally acquainted with the Superiors in all their greatness.

What is significant about these orations, especially the last one, is that they establish a direct connection between the Rosicrucian order per se and the religious policies later followed under Frederick William's reign. In the final oration we see the Prince, in the context of a Gold- und Rosenkreuz ceremony,

and in the name of the mysterious Superiors, being told by Wöllner the sort of policy that he would be expected to pursue when he became King, a policy that was, moreover, fully consistent with the philosophy of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz as revealed in the writings that we have examined.

These injunctions, however, were only the beginning of Wöllner's strategy. From June 1784 he delivered regular lectures to the Prince on matters of state, constantly denouncing Frederick the Great and impressing upon the Prince that everything would have to change when Frederick died, especially in matters of religion.[12]

Not content with these lectures, Wöllner delivered to the Prince on 15 September 1785 an "Abhandlung der Religion" (Treatise on Religion), further specifying the religious policies that he wished to see implemented.[13] Beginning with some general reflections on the subject, the treatise declares that the true and pure Christian religion is the only lasting basis for human happiness in this world and the world beyond. Furthermore religion helps the monarch to rule his nation well. How, Wöllner asks, can a people be expected to revere a monarch who does not revere God? He goes on to say that religion brings the greatest benefit for all levels of society, to the advantage of the ruler. For example, a pious soldier is a good soldier because he will abide by his oath, be willing in his difficult profession, be brave because of contempt for death, and will not plunder or rob. Religion also brings benefits in the sphere of sexual morality, because sexual diseases and the deliberate prevention of birth militate against desirable population increase.

It is worth noting that the reasons of state to which Wöllner appeals here were in themselves not incompatible with Enlightened thinking. Many an *Aufklärer* or *philosophe* would have applauded his intentions although they might not have agreed with his solution. Frederick the Great had said that his subjects could believe what they liked as long as they obeyed. Wöllner was saying that subjects are more likely to obey if they are good Christians. Having said this, however, Wöllner goes on to declare himself emphatically in favour of religious toleration.

On the whole of God's earth there is nothing more unfair, more unjust, more debasing to the freedom of the soul and more deplorable for the whole of humankind than religious intolerance or the attempt by one group of people to coerce another against their convictions in religious matters. ...

> If a person errs I should try to persuade him, but if I fail I must let him go his way in peace, be tolerant and not infringe his beliefs. ... I must not usurp God's rôle of judge...

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[12] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[13] The "Abhandlung" is summarized and extensively quoted in Schwartz, pp. 73-91. My resumé of the treatise is based on this source.

Wöllner declares that this point of view should be adhered to vis-à-vis Heathens and Mohammedans. How much more, therefore, should it be adhered to in the case of people who believe in Jesus and therefore possess the true religion but are merely divided through denominational differences? He goes on to say that a tolerant ruler views all his subjects with one consideration in mind: that they should be good citizens of the state. He grants them full freedom of thought and action, provided that neither is detrimental to public peace and security, good morals, harmonious relations with their fellows and above all the well-being of the state. The same applies to religion. The subject should have full freedom of conscience and worship provided he does not disturb the public peace and those who adhere to other denominations in the state.

Thus far there is very little in the "Abhandlung" to which any *Aufklärer* could object. At this point, however, Wöllner introduces a discussion of "the misuses of tolerance". In the present century, he says, when so many people philosophize about everything and no longer believe, the pillars of the Christian religion are under attack from shallow minds (who are always in the majority). As long as these people keep their ideas to themselves, behave like good citizens and give no offence to their fellows they should be treated with tolerance, for it is entirely their own affair if they bring about their own damnation. But as soon as they start to spread their poison and to attack Christianity publicly they become a danger to the state, and to honour and reward such people is a misuse of tolerance.

Next, Wöllner states the "sources of unbelief", and here he reveals the essential epistemological differences between his *Weltanchauung* and that of the *Aufklärer*, differences that we have seen arise repeatedly in the polemics between the Gold- und Rosenkreuz and its opponents. The first source of unbelief, he says, is an incorrect understanding of human nature on the part of the learned. They maintain that nothing can be accepted that goes beyond reason and that cannot be substantiated by reason. They declare that the natural drives of human beings are good, and that evil is caused only by their misuse. They say that humankind has never been any better since the Creation and that the doctrine of the fall of Adam is an allegory or fable. Wöllner rebuffs these rationalists as follows:

> Now then, you smart-alecs [*Klüglinge*]... see how the whole of nature contradicts you. Do you understand the attracting power of the magnet? Do you know the reason why compass needle points north...? Do you comprehend the working of the soul on the body? ... How false, therefore, is the conclusion that I must deny everything that my reason cannot grasp. Human nature remains a mystery to us, which we cannot explain without the Bible and divine revelation.

He goes on to say that Prussia has become the main seat of unbelief in Germany. Part of the blame, he says, lies in the bad example of Frederick the Great

and the influence of French writers such as Voltaire, d'Alembert, Helvétius and Diderot. He also blames misuse of tolerance and the present Minister of the Department of Religious Affairs, Zedlitz, whom he accuses of wishing to extirpate Christianity from the country and introduce deism and naturalism. After listing his grievances against Zedlitz, which include some far-fetched sounding accusations about seducing orphan girls, he proceeds to the means of putting matters right. First, the future King should set a good example by going regularly to church. Secondly, he should introduce a new edict for the honouring of the Sabbath—for example, there should be no army manoeuvres on Sundays. Finally, he should appoint an honest man to head the Department of Religious Affairs. In this last recommendation Wöllner clearly had himself in mind.

A year later, in August 1786, when Frederick the Great died and his nephew came to the throne, Wöllner hoped his ambition to head the Department of Religious Affairs would be realised, but at first the new King preferred to give him other responsibilities. He was made *Geheimer Oberfinanzrat* in charge of the *Dispositionskasse*, a treasury containing the surplus funds from the other major state purses. He was also made supervisor of the royal building programmes at Berlin and Potsdam and given a place on the *Generaldirektorium*, which had responsibility for factories, trade and tariffs. More importantly he acted, along with Bischoffswerder, as Frederick William's confidant, accompanying the King on journeys, advising on appointments and drafting royal speeches and cabinet orders. Shortly after the accession he was also raised to the nobility.

During the first two years of Frederick William's reign Wöllner busied himself with some of the reforms that he proposed earlier. It was largely due to him, for example, that the *Regie*, the hated French excise system of Frederick the Great, was dissolved, that the state monopolies on tobacco and coffee were abolished and various humanitarian measures introduced, such as a provision of pensions for the widows and orphans of deceased army officers. There were also significant cultural achievements to which Wöllner contributed. As building supervisor, for example, he must have played a part in commissioning the architect Langhans to design the Brandenburg Gate (built 1788-94), which was to become such an eloquent symbol of the grandeur and tragedy of Berlin.

Wöllner, however, was impatient to set to work on his religious programme, and he did not let the King forget this, nor did he shrink from continuing to use the Gold- und Rosenkreuz as a lever. On 11 April 1788, for example, he sent a message to the Frederick William addressing him as an *"Ordensbruder"*. He reminded the King of the *Treatise on Religion* and urged him to devote an evening to studying its recommendations for improving the state of religion in Prussia. If the King were to do this the order would certainly

value him very highly.[14] Wöllner's efforts finally came to fruition on 3 July 1788, when he replaced Zedlitz as head of the Department of Religious Affairs. The campaign against the *Aufklärung* was ready to begin in earnest.

Wöllner wasted no time, for six days after his appointment an Edict Concerning Religion was issued. Wöllner was to all intents and purposes the author, although it bore the signature of the King and was also signed by the High Chancellor, J.H.C. Freiherr von Carmer, and another Minister, W.F. Freiherr von Dörnberg.[15] After a preamble by the King in which he emphasizes the need to preserve the purity of Protestantism in Prussia and to combat superstition, falsification of fundamental Christian truths and corruption of morals, the Edict proceeds to spell out the rights of the religious groups and denominations in Prussia. The three official confessions—the Reformed, the Lutheran and the Catholic—are to continue to enjoy their existing rights. Furthermore the other sects and groups that had enjoyed toleration are to continue to do so, provided they refrain from attempting to convert others. The Edict specifically states, for example, that Jews, Herrenhuter, Mennonites and Bohemian Brethren are to have freedom to hold assemblies for worship. All confessions without exception are forbidden to proselytize, and one passage attacks "disguised Catholic priests, monks and crypto-Jesuits" who seek to convert so-called heretics. Thus far the terms of the Edict were, as Epstein points out "a significant constitutional advance for Prussia, where toleration had hitherto possessed only the status of a Frederician maxim of government, not of a right based upon written guarantees".[16]

In section 7, however, the King launches into an attack on those "Protestant pastors who allow themselves unbridled freedom in regard to the doctrine of their confession". These pastors, he says, repudiate basic truths of the Protestant Church and the Christian religion and preach in a frivolous manner incompatible with Christian piety and calculated to shake the faith of their flock. They are not ashamed to revive the long since refuted errors of the Socinians, deists and naturalists and to spread them in the much abused name of *Aufklärung*. The following section states that pastors must in future refrain from such practices, on pain of dismissal. Just as no judge can be allowed to interpret the law according to his own whims, so no preacher can be allowed to lead the people astray by perverting the fundamental truths of Christianity. Section 9

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[14] Colmar Grünhagen, "Der Kampf gegen die Aufklärung unter Friedrich Wilhelm II mit besonderer Rücksicht auf Schlesien", in *Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertümer Schlesiens*, Vol. XXVII (1893), pp. 11-12.

[15] The text of the Edict Concerning Religion is printed in, *inter alia*, C.L.H. Rabe, *Sammlung Preußischer Gesetze* (1823), pp. 726 ff.

[16] Epstein, *The Genesis of German Conservatism*, p. 361.

urges the Department of Religious Affairs and the Lutheran and Reformed churches to be vigilant against such mischief-makers. And Section 10 decrees that in future all people appointed as pastors and teachers of religion in schools and universities shall "provide no ground for questioning their internal adherence to the creed they are employed to teach".

The publication of the Edict touched off a spate of pamphlets attacking and defending the measure.[17] Its opponents denounced it as a tyrannical infringement of freedom of conscience. Its supporters replied that it merely safeguarded the purity of Protestant teaching from infiltration and corruption by the rationalists. What most of the conservatives argued, in essence, was that the Edict was, to use a present-day analogy, upholding advertising standards by making sure that consumers of Protestantism were given the product that they had a right to expect from the label. One did not need to be a religious fanatic to be persuaded by this argument. In fact one of the people who wrote in support of the Edict was the self-confessed Spinozist atheist, Simon Ludwig Eberhard De Marées.[18]

In order to reinforce the Edict Concerning Religion and to suppress public criticism of it, an Edict of Censorship was issued on 19 December 1788, requiring books on religious matters to be submitted to government censors before publication (it is only fair to point out that Wöllner had misgivings about this as he feared it would stir up further resentment).[19] This Edict soon proved very difficult to enforce, partly because the censors themselves proved more lenient than Wöllner would have liked, and in certain cases he felt compelled to intervene and overrule the censor's decision, which only increased the inevitable furore. Furthermore, authors whose books were banned sometimes resorted to publishing them abroad and smuggling them back into Prussia. Next Wöllner introduced a *Landeskatechismus*, to be used as a yardstick of orthodoxy throughout the country, against the opposition of the *Oberkonsistorium* which had remained largely hostile to the new conservative policies and continued to do its best to frustrate them.

It was clear that what Wöllner and the King needed was a loyal group of men to enforce their policies, and to find it they turned to Silesia, where some astonishing events now took place. Silesia, the home of Caspar Schwenckfeld, Daniel Czepko and Angelus Silesius, had long been a cradle of Christian mysticism and Pietism, currents which, as we have seen flowed into the Gold- und

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[17] See H.P.C. Henke, *Beurtheilung aller Schriften welche durch das Religionsedikt und andere damit zusammenhängende Verfügungen veranlaßt sind* (Hamburg, 1793). See also Epstein's summary of the arguments for and against the Edict in *The Genesis of German Conservatism*, pp. 145-153.

[18] Epstein, pp. 146-7.

[19] Schwartz, p. 129.

Rosenkreuz. It is not surprising, therefore, that we find a Silesian dimension to the story of Frederick William's reign.

The episode that now unfolded involved three curious characters. The first was Hermann Daniel Hermes (1738-1821), Provost of the church of St. Maria Magdalena in Breslau and a man of deeply pietistic outlook.[20] The second of the trio was Hermes's son-in-law, Heinrich Sigismund Oswald, a failed merchant who had become a writer and poet enamoured of Christian mystical and pietistic themes and who was a member of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz.[21] Oswald's literary works included one entitled *Analogie der leiblichen und geistlichen Geburt* (1786), which sought to establish a parallel between the various stages of generation, from conception to birth, and the process of Christian rebirth. This work was profoundly influenced by alchemy, as the following passage reveals:

> When God created man, these two powers (fire and water) were united in him, and as they existed within him in the most perfect amity he had the capacity to generate from out of himself. After he had been deluded, however, by the infernal magical power of outcast spirits, the centre of his fire principle was opened up and gained dominance over the elemental power of the water tincture...
>
> In order to obviate any further disordering of the human being, He decided, in His eternal love, to create a woman out of Adam's water tincture and in this way to divide the elemental powers of fire and water. The male retained fire as the main force of his being, and the female was given the water principle.[22]

The notion of fire and water as two primal creative elements is found in other alchemical/Rosicrucian works of the period, such as Ketmia Vere's *Der Compaß der Weisen*.[23] This passage therefore reveals Oswald as a true son of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. Whether Hermes was also a member is not certain, but it seems likely in view of the similarity of their outlook and the fact that Hermes wrote a laudatory foreword to his son-in-law's book. Closely associated with Hermes and Oswald was the third member of the trio, Gottlob F. Hillmer (born 1756), a schoolteacher who had been given a pietistic upbringing among the Herrnhuter. Hillmer was introduced by Oswald into the Gold- und Rosenkreuz order and became a *protégé* of Duke Eugen of Württemberg (1758-1822), who was Circle Director of the order in Breslau and bore the order name of Frater Victrinus. The Duke, not the ruler of the duchy but a

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[20] For details of Hermes's life, see D. Georg Hoffmann, *Hermann Daniel Hermes, der Günstling Wöllners (1731-1807)* (Breslau, Kommissions-Verlag der Evangelischen Buchhandlung, 1914).

[21] Schwartz, p. 177.

[22] Quoted by Hoffmann (see note 20 above), p. 33.

[23] Ketmia Vere, *Der Compass der Weisen* (Berlin/Leipzig, Ringmacher, 1779). Wolfstieg (entry 42501) says that "Ketmia Vere" is a pseudonym for Adam Michael Birkholz. The book has also been attributed to the alchemist Jollifief.

member of a junior branch of the family, was a Prussian cavalry officer and later general, and is credited with having written a work of Rosicrucian cast entitled *Freymäurerische Versammlungsreden.*[24] In 1785 the Duke took Hillmer into his service as a councillor.[25]

With the entry of these three characters the story of Frederick William's reign takes on a distinctly *opera buffa* note, typified by the events that took place in Breslau in 1790—events which, however comic they may seem, are important because of the bearing they have on the policies subsequently followed by the King.[26]

It will be recalled that it was at the Silesian town of Schatzlar that Frederick William, as Crown Prince, had undergone his conversion experience that had led him ultimately to the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. In the meantime he had returned to Silesia on the annual army reviews carried out by Frederick the Great. In 1790 he had been in the region preparing for a military campaign against Austria. Peace intervened, however, and the King instead went to Breslau, where he took up quarters in the nearby castle of Alt-Schneidig, owned by Prince Hohenlohe (probably Prince Josef Christian von Hohenlohe [1740-1817], the last Prince-Bishop of Breslau from 1795). As usual, Bischoffswerder was with him.

Bischosffswerder's method of influencing the King was different from that of Wöllner. Whereas Wöllner exploited Frederick William's piety, Bischoffswerder exploited his credulity over supernatural phenomena. In her deposition the Countess Lichtenau reported that Bischoffswerder, when in the presence of Frederick William, would often claim to be in touch with spirits and encouraged the King to perceive spirits everywhere. The King believed these claims and was all the more in awe of the man whom the Rosicrucian order had selected as his guide.[27]

A golden opportunity to make use of Frederick William's credulity came during the Breslau visit of August 1790. The ground had been prepared in the following way. It appeared that a local girl, suffering from a crippling illness, had been treated by a certain Lieutenant von Zayzeck, using "animal magne-

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[24] Lennhoff and Posner, *Internationales Freimaurer-Lexikon* (Vienna, 1932; reprinted Vienna/Munich, Amalthea-Verlag, 1980), p. 1727.

[25] Schwartz, pp. 177-8, and Hoffmann, p. 47.

[26] The story of these events is told in detail by Schwartz, pp. 179ff. As regards Schwartz's sources, he writes in his foreword as follows: "Außer den an ihrer Stelle angeführten gedruckten Büchern und Schriften sind als wichtigste und ergiebiste Quellen die Akten des Geh. Staatsarchivs in Berlin benutzt worden, besonders die der Rep. 9, 47, 76, 89, 92, 96, 121, Prov. Brandenburg 40. Ich darf es mir und dem Leser versagen, die Hunderte von Aktenstücken mit ihren zum Teil weitschweifigen Bezeichnungen namentlich und wörtlich aufzuzahlen." The Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz inform me that most of these files have been lost or dispersed, but that the numbers are correct.

[27] Schwartz, p. 44.

tism", the concept that had recently been popularized by Mesmer. During one of the sessions she suddenly fell into a trance and prescribed the medicines that would cure her. These were obtained, and she recovered. Like Gaßner, she then began to prescribe cures for other people, and her fame spread rapidly. One of those who went to consult her was Oswald. After being cured, he returned to study the technique of "magnetism" with her, and in due course took her under his care in place of Zayzeck. Allegedly, she told him that he had been sent to awaken new powers in her. At any rate, under Oswald's guidance she developed into a clairvoyant, and it was believed that while she was in trance her spirit communicated with God.

Bischsoffswerder, having heard of these happenings, introduced Oswald to Frederick William, who was already familiar with one of Oswald's works. The King responded by awarding Oswald on the spot an annual salary of 800 Taler and giving him a position as councillor to one of his ministers, von Hoym. It was also arranged that the King should attend some sessions with the clairvoyant.

The first of these sessions took place on the afternoon of 26 August in a small country house. Present were the clairvoyant herself, Oswald, Hermes, who took a record of the proceedings,[28] the King, von Hoym and Count Karl Adolf von Brühl. Von Brühl was an ardent magnetizer who had been made known to the King by Bischoffswerder and in 1792 was to be favoured with a post in the state building department. He was also a Rosicrucian, and he and Bischoffswerder had both been members of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz circle in Leipzig.[29] The clairvoyant was duly put into a trance and, in the name of God, told the monarch that he was one of the elect and that he should not worry about any sins that he might have committed, for all his sins were discharged. Frederick William is reported to have been deeply moved. She then proceeded to make a request which, like most of her utterances at these sessions, smacks of careful prompting by Oswald. Pointing to Hermes she asked the King to show some sympathy to the "pious old man" and to "ease the burden of his remaining days". The King agreed to this, as well as other requests by the clairvoyant, and soon afterwards Bischoffswerder was able to inform the "pious old man" that he was henceforth to receive a salary of 400 Taler for the post of *Oberkonsistorialrat*, which he had already been occupying unpaid for three years. The King also awarded 20 Taler a month to the clairvoyant and later paid off her debts of 100 Taler.

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[28] Hermes's records of this and other sessions is the main source of Schwartz's account of the proceedings.

[29] Ludwik Hass, *Sekta farmazonii warszwskiej* (Warsaw, Panstwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1980), p. 158, note 59.

On 10 September a second session was held at the same venue. This time, in addition to the previous company, those present included two more Rosicrucians, Hillmer and the Duke Eugen of Württemberg, as well as the Prussian Foreign Minister, Count Kurt von Haugwitz. On this occasion the girl's messages had a strong political flavour. The previous month the King had signed the Reichenbach Treaty, thus averting war between Prussia and Austria. Possibly Bischoffswerder feared that doubts had been raised in Frederick William's mind about the wisdom of the treaty and therefore prompted the clairvoyant to reassure the King. This would seem to be the most likely explanation of the girl's message, which reassured the King that sighs of relief were being heard in the humble cottages of the realm, thanks to the God that gave Frederick William his peace-loving soul. She then went on to warn the King that enemies were hovering around him and that he should be careful to place his trust in faithful men such as Brühl and Bischoffswerder. On attempting to return to her normal self, the girl was apparently attacked by Satan, and only with difficulty was the fiend beaten off and the girl's return to normality accomplished. A third session was held, attended only by the King, Oswald and Zayzeck, but no record was preserved.

The King's last direct encounter with the medium was at the house of Hermes, where the pastor lectured the King on the need to make all preachers in the kingdom conform to the Bible and live up to the standards that prevailed in Breslau. The King agreed, and Hermes asked him who was going to be given the task of executing the policy. Frederick William replied that he would decide. Then the girl, having been "magnetized" once more, wrote something for the King on a piece of paper. What she wrote is not recorded, but it seems likely that it was a list of names, probably including those of Hermes, Oswald and Hillmer.

On his return to Berlin after some five weeks in Breslau, the King spoke to Wöllner about enlisting Hermes as a collaborator in the struggle against the *Aufklärer* and asked Wöllner to commission Hermes to draw up a scheme for imposing orthodoxy on the clergy. Hermes immediately set to work, and the result was a document entitled *Schema Examinis Candidatorum S.S. Ministerii rite instituendi*, recommending that all candidates for the clergy should be suitably drilled and subjected to a general test of orthodoxy. This was immediately sent to be printed without the knowledge or approval of the *Oberkonsistorium*, which protested to the King when it heard what had happened.

Meanwhile Oswald had been summoned to Berlin as a *Vorleser* to the King with the title of *Geheimrat*. He came to Berlin early in 1791 but returned for a time to Breslau to complete the arrangements for his move and to hold some more sessions with the medium, whose utterances were duly relayed to the King. At a session on 24 March, for example, her message was: "Tell Father Hermes that he is a very fortunate man. God will soon cause him to succeed in

all that he is undertaking in the cause of Jesus. The Monarch will carry out everything that Hermes suggests. God has already given the King the strength to exert severity in holding the recalcitrant *Oberkonsistorialräte* to their duty, and He will also give him the strength to remove from their offices all those who are unworthy and who resist the dissemination of the true teaching." On 29 March, at the final session before Oswald's departure, the girl urged that "the good Hillmer" be also brought to Berlin.

While in Breslau Oswald also conveyed to Hermes the message that the King wished him to make further suggestions for the improvement of orthodoxy in churches and schools. Hermes obediently set to work and soon produced another document entitled *Kurzer Entwurf der Vorschläge zur Verbesserung des Kirchen-, Schulen- und Akademiewesens.*

In April the King summoned Hermes and Hillmer to Potsdam where, in conjunction with Wöllner, discussions took place regarding the formation of a new supervisory body to carry out the policy of enforcing religious orthodoxy and censoring theological books. The following month this body was launched under the name of the *Immediat-Examinations-Kommission*, the word "immediate" indicating that it was responsible directly to the King and not to the *Oberkonsistorium*. It had five members, the two most active being Hermes and Hillmer, who were also both made *Oberkonsistorialräte*. From Oels, to which he had briefly returned to prepare for his move to Berlin, Hillmer wrote to Wöllner a declaration of devotion. Previously, he said, he had honoured Wöllner as one of his superiors in the Order. Now, since the Potsdam meetings, he regarded him not just as a chief but as a father. In August 1791 Hermes and Hillmer settled in the same house in Berlin to begin the work of the new commission in earnest.

The *Immediat-Examinations-Kommission* failed in most of its attempts to bring about dimissals of unorthodox clergy, but it was effective for a time in establishing a system of religious surveillance throughout the kingdom, with the help of 12 provincial branches, and in forcing teachers and preachers to toe the line. For example, it drew up a set of preaching regulations requiring clergymen to preach on assigned biblical texts on certain Sundays, thus making it impossible for rationalist-minded clergy to avoid parts of the Bible dealing with miracles and other topics that they found embarrasssing. Furthermore all new candidates for ordination were subjected to the *Landeskatechismus* and were required to make guarantees of their orthodoxy and conformity to the Augsburg Confession. In the sphere of education, new instructions were issued to teachers (who were usually clergymen waiting for pastoral positions),

placing greater emphasis on the memorizing of the catechism, scriptural passages and hymns.[30]

Meanwhile the struggle between the *Aufklärung* and its enemies was taking on an increasingly political tone as alarm at the events of the French Revolution spread in Germany, tending to break down the earlier alliance between the *Aufklärung* and enlightened despotism. In Vienna the Emperor Leopold II was giving generous financial support to the conservative writer Leopold Alois Hoffmann, who thundered against the *Aufklärer* in his journal the *Wiener Zeitschrift*. Wöllner reported enthusiastically about Hoffmann to Frederick William II, saying that the *Wiener Zeitschrift* was in a position to "strike a great blow against the *Aufklärer*", and at Wöllner's suggestion, the King sent a message of support to Hoffmann.[31] There are hints, as we shall see in the chapter following, that Hoffmann was for a time a member of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz but became disenchanted with it. Interestingly, he attempted, with the blessing of the Emperor, to form an alternative anti-*Aufklärung* secret society. Not content with subsidizing Hoffmann, Leopold also issued, on 3 December 1791, a circular to all rulers in the German Empire urging them to forbid inflammatory writings, to suppress uprisings and to be ready to help their neighbours to do the same. Frederick William was much alarmed by this circular and relayed it to his ministers with a message expresssing the need for stricter censorship and a closer watch on booksellers and publishers.[32]

Another vociferous enemy of the *Aufklärung*, and a contributor to the *Weiner Zietschrift*, was Johann Georg Zimmermann (1728-1795), a native of Switzerland who had become court physician at Hanover to the absentee elector, George III of Great Britain, and had also attended the dying Frederick the Great. Zimmermann attacked the *Aufklärer* relentlessly in a series of increasingly venomous books. His willingness to perceive a Jacobin lurking behind every bush is illustrated by the warning he sent to Wöllner on 10 March 1792 that a group of men had been sent from Paris to poison King Frederick William II, though he would not reveal the source of the information. Later he sent to Wöllner the names of leading "democrats and revolutionaries", including J.G. Forster, and listed various places, such as Braunschweig and Hamburg, where he said there were Jacobin clubs. Couriers, he claimed, were constantly coming and going between these clubs.[33] There is, incidentally, no evidence that Zimmermann was involved with the Gold- und Rosenkreuz or was even sympathetic towards it.

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30 Epstein, pp. 364-5.
31 Schwartz, p. 29.
32 Schwartz, pp. 234-5.
33 Schwartz, pp. 240-41.

In this increasingly heated atmosphere, Wöllner and the *Immediat-Examinations-Kommission* pressed ahead with their campaign against the *Aufklärer*. The leading *Aufklärer* Christoph Friedrich Nicolai was forced to move his *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek* to Altona in Danish territory, and Gedicke and Biester, publishers of the *Berliner Monatschrift*, were similarly forced to remove their publication from Berlin. The philosopher Kant also fell foul of the Wöllner clique when in 1794 he published a work entitled *Religion within the Limits of Pure Reason*, part of which had previously been rejected by the censor (Hermes) when submitted for publication in the *Berliner Monatschrift*. Kant was obliged to submit an apology promising to be silent in future on religious topics.[34]

There now came an unexpected turn of events, when Wöllner fell out of favour with the King. Wöllner had always been able to temper his zeal with a certain realistic caution, something of which Hermes was not capable, and it is possible that this led Hermes to intrigue against Wöllner. At any rate on 8 March 1794 Frederick William sent Wöllner a sharply worded communication deploring the inadequate progress in the struggle against the *Aufklärung* and removing Wöllner from his job in the Building Department so that he could concentrate on religious matters. Wöllner avowed his continued devotion to the cause, but advised the King that it was best "to make haste slowly, where the choleric Hermes is inclined to proceed with violence".[35]

Wöllner's caution was soon proved right when Hermes and Hillmer, at the beginning of a tour of Prussian universities in the spring of 1794 to check on the orthodoxy of theology faculties, were met at Halle by rioting students and forced to beat an undignified retreat. When an attempt was made to punish the offenders the university prevaricated. Wöllner, while deploring the clumsy behaviour of Hermes and Hillmer, ordered that henceforth theology teaching at Halle should conform to the Edict Concerning Religion. The university appealed to the *Staatsrat*, which was hostile to Wöllner, and eventually a compromise was reached which was in effect a victory for the university.[36]

Meanwhile Wöllner had found himself at odds with the King and with Bischoffswerder over another issue, namely Prussia's policy towards revolutionary France. Bischoffswerder had long favoured an alliance with Austria against the French, in opposition to those who supported a continuation of Frederick the Great's policy of Prussian aggrandizement at Austria's expense, and we have seen how the Breslau medium was used to help convince the King of the rightness of the Convention of Reichenbach of 1790, which af-

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[34] Epstein, p. 366.
[35] *Ibid.*
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 367.

firmed the Austro-Prussian reconciliation. In February 1791 Bischoffswerder was sent on a secret mission to Vienna to consolidate the rapprochement, and he returned in the summer to negotiate a treaty setting out a common policy towards France and Poland, signed on 25 July.[37] A month later there followed the joint Declaration of Pillnitz, in which the two countries expressed their support for the French monarchy. On 20 April 1792 France declared war on Austria, and Prussia entered the war on Austria's side. The war was a fiasco, which ended in Prussia concluding a separate peace with France, the Treaty of Basel, signed on 5 April 1795.

Wöllner might have been expected to champion any crusade against the Jacobins, but here again realism prevailed over ideology, and right from the start he counselled the King against the war, a stance which must have brought him into sharp conflict with Bischoffswerder. Wöllner's position *vis-à-vis* the war is made clear in a report to the King dated 7 October 1794. This shows that, far from being a sycophant, Wöllner was capable of speaking his mind to the King in no uncertain terms, even after he had been reprimanded for his lack of zeal in the religious campaign. In the report he unsuccessfully urged Frederick William to withdraw the entire Prussian army on the Rhine to within the borders of Prussia, making defence of the homeland the first priority.[38]

The last few years of Frederick William II's reign were thus marked by disunity in the Rosicrucian ranks and friction between Wöllner and the King. The days of the clique were numbered, and with the death of Frederick William II in 1797 its power disappeared completely. When Frederick William III succeeded his father the entire clique was dismissed. Bischoffswerder retired from the army on full pension and went to live on the Polish estate given to him by Frederick William II. Wöllner fared somewhat worse. Dismissed without pension, he retired to an estate bought with his wife's money in 1790, where he died an embittered man in 1800.

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[37] Epstein, p. 371.

[38] M.L. (i.e. Max Lehmann), "Wöllner und die auswärtige Politik Friedrich Wilhelm's II," in *Historische Zeitschrift*, Vol. 62, 1889, pp. 285-6.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE *AUFKLÄRUNG* REACTION AND THE DECLINE OF THE GOLD- UND ROSENKREUZ

Paradoxically, just at the time when the Rosicrucian clique in Prussia was achieving a position of power and influence, the Gold- und Rosenkreuz order was facing a crisis that was to precipitate its decline. At the root of this crisis was the way in which the order's leadership and its policies were, from the early 1780s, increasingly called in question by a significant number of members. At the same time this unease among the membership was compounded, and to some extent exacerbated, by the unfavourable publicity given to the order by its enemies among the *Aufklärer*.

Great embarrassment was caused to the order by an exposé entitled *Der Rosenkreuzer in seiner Blöße*, published at Nuremberg in 1781. The author, who called himself "Magister Pianco", is often identified as a disaffected former member called Hans Heinrich Freiherr von Ecker und Eckhoffen, who was to play a leading role in the formation of the splinter group known as the Asiatic Brethren, which will be discussed in a separate chapter. This identification is, however, highly doubtful. Ecker himself denied authorship and attributed the book to one Friedrich Gottlieb Ephraim Weiße (Pianco or Bianco being a pun on his surname).[1] Addressed to Phoebron (Schleiß von Löwenfeld), the book levelled a number of criticisms at the order. It was wrong, Pianco declared, that Jews were not admitted, and he also attacked the order's teachings as being both false and obscurantist. He declared:

> Your constitution, your doctrine, your sciences and thus your whole table [of grades] are totally false. The ancient sages, from whom you pretend to have taken them over, never knew them and never practised them, and they were concerned with quite other matters from those that you claim.[2]

Pianco also attacked the alchemical claims of the order, declaring that only nature could transmute metals. He furthermore revealed various details such as the names of the grades, their admission fees and passwords. The book drew

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1 A.A. Santing, *De Historische Rosenkruizers* (12 parts, Amersfoort, Bouwsteenen, 1930-32; reprinted as one volume, Amsterdam, W.N. Schors, 1977), p. 248.

2 Magister Pianco, *Der Rosenkreuzer in seiner Blöße* (Amsterdam [i.e. Nuremberg], 1781), p. 143.

a counter-attack from Schleiβ von Löwenfeld in a work entitled *Der im Lichte der Wahrheit strahlende Rosenkreuzer*, in which he claimed that the information given by Pianco about the grades was false.[3] He said that Pianco had been thrown out of the order as a "Junior Practicus" and therefore could not have known any details of the higher grades. Pianco's book was, however, only one of a number of exposés. We have already seen (see Chapter 7), how in the same year, 1781, was published another exposé entitled *Ueber Jesuiten, Freymaurer und deutsche Rosenkreutzer*, allegedly written by one Joseph Aloisius Maier, "former member of the Society of Jesus", but in fact by the Illuminatus Adolph Freiherr von Knigge. In this work, Knigge declared that the new Rosicrucians were not following the true spirit of the original brethren but were spreading obscurantism and superstition. We have also examined the Rosicrucians' reply to Knigge, in the form of a work entitled *Die Pflichten der G. und R.C. alten Sistems*, and have have seen how the debate highlighted certain fundamental points of difference between the Gold- und Rosenkreuz and the *Aufklärer*.

As these differences became increasingly sharply defined it became correspondingly more difficult for anyone of *Aufklärung* sympathies to remain in the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. Faced with a choice between the two camps, many chose to leave the order. One of those who did was Georg Forster, formerly, as we have seen, an ardent member of the Kassel circle. Forster's wife Therese, in her memoirs, described his desertion of the order as follows:

> The effect that the order had had on his fate and his development was something that he often talked about. ... Among the most damaging consequences were the loss of time, which kept him from solid achievements, and the expenditure of cash that was demanded. ... The disproportion between his income and expenditure was thereby widened year by year, and the resulting painful embarrassment entangled him even more deeply in hopeless efforts to obtain comfort through vain prayer and to attain gold and higher wisdom through mystical researches into the powers of nature. The foolishness of the means finally opened his eyes to the foolishness of the purpose, and the year before he left Cassel he severed that connection.[4]

Forster's friend Thomas Sömmering, who had been Circle Director, left the order at the same time. Possibly it was Sömmering who led the way and Forster who followed. At any rate, after his departure Forster began to be assailed by fears of retribution from the order, and he was relieved to be able to leave Kassel and take up a post at the Polish university of Wilna. Before leaving he

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[3] Phoebron, *Der im Lichte der Wahrheit strahlende Rosenkreuzer* (Leipzig, Hilscher, 1782).

[4] Quoted by B. Blawis in *Einiges aus dem Leben und der Zeit zweier wenig bekannter Freimaurer des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Zeulenroda/Leipzig, Das Freimaurer-Museum, 1930), pp. 179-80.

was warned by Nicolai: "You will be among the Jesuits there. Beware of them, for they are cursed people."[5] It appears to have been Nicolai who planted, or at least encouraged, in Forster the belief that the Jesuits were behind the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, a theory that was to gain wide currency in *Aufklärung* circles. This belief is expressed in a letter to Sömmering written from Dresden on 5 July 1784, in which Forster laments his whole association with the Gold- und Rosenkreuz:

> Herr von Schlieffen, good friend though he is, would make fun of our fear, since he does not know the details, and it would take great effort to convince him that Rosicrucianism is a work of the Jesuits. ... You know my character, my love of truth, my burning thirst for certainty, my conviction regarding certain truths and my somewhat fanatical tendency to wish to hold them to be possible and true. It was only this that caused me to labour for four years in C. [Cassel], to work ... at my supposed spiritual purification, to castigate myself, to deny myself all the innocent joys of life, to give heartfelt, pious and fervent speeches, full of honest enthusiasm, in our gatherings, to go round visiting the Brethren to exhort and encourage them, to risk money and reputation, in short to offer up all my powers in order to achieve the goal that had been held out to me as being attainable. Now that I see, now that I know that this prospect is a phantom that has led my imagination uphill and down dale, the thing is finished, and I seek the truth where I now know it can be found.[6]

In the same letter Forster refers again to the "Jesuit R.C. Order" and also condemns the whole of Freemasonry as "a bad thing". Later the same year, when he sojourned in Vienna on his way to Wilna, he reconsidered his views on Masonry and made contact with enlightened masonic circles. To Rosicrucianism, however, he remained implacably opposed. From Vienna, on 14 August 1784, he wrote to Sömmering:

> Masonry is in full swing. Everything is masonic. All [masons] of the Empire are united under a common head, Count Dietrichstein, as National Grand Master (that includes Austrian, Bohemian, Hungarian and Italian territories). Count D. is said to be a R.C., but he no longer has any influence to spread the R.C. order or to draw any advantage for it. ... On the contrary, the whole masonic body is working for *Aufklärung*. ... The [lodge] Zur wahren Eintracht is the one that is doing most for *Aufklärung*. ... The best educated minds of Vienna and the best writers are members of it.

Forster goes on to recount a conversation with Ignaz von Born, Master of the lodge Zur wahren Eintracht. As we have seen (Chapter 8), Born was a bitter enemy of the Rosicrucians on account of their persecution of the Illuminati, and his remarks to Forster bear this out. Forster writes:

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[5] *Ibid.*, p. 184.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

> He related to me how the Iluminati had been betrayed in every detail to the Rosicrucians. And, just guess, it was Baron von Knigge who, having become reconciled with them [the Rosicrucians] after railing against them, told them everything about the Illuminati. A fine new trait in his character! ... Everyone that I have been able to sound out on the subject confirms that the R.C.s and the Jesuits are totally bound up together.[7]

In his diaries, Forster reports having met in Vienna a certain Baron Linder (Forster mis-spells his name as "Lieder"), Master of the Beständigkeit lodge, who turned out to be another disenchanted Rosicrucian. Forster records what Linder told him, as follows:

> Rittner in Regensburg is probably the head of the whole thing with a couple of others. Their vindictiveness is indescribable. He had been through the processes of all 8 grades before becoming a Magus. He is convinced that none of them are genuine. ... Here there are over 100 [Rosicrucians], but all works here have been suspended. ... He is, however, fully convinced of the truth of transmutation. ...[8]

Linder also informed Forster that the late Jollifief, former secretary to the Emperor Francis, husband of Maria Theresa, was Abyssinus, author of *Compaß der Weisen*, a work widely read in Rosicrucian circles. Jollifief had been, Lieder implied, also a Rosicrucian. The reference to "Rittner in Regensburg" is puzzling, as other writers refer only to Keller and von Jägern as being the leaders in Regensburg. The significance of Linder's remarks, however, is that they are a further illustration of the growing disenchantment with the Gold- und Rosenkreuz order at this time.

The following year, 1785, was an even more critical one for the order. For one thing it saw the issuing of Joseph II's *Freimaurerpatent* on 11 December, which greatly reduced the number of lodges and brought Austrian Freemasonry under stricter royal supervision. There is evidence that part of the reason for this edict, in addition to the aim of combating the Illuminati, was a desire to curb the penetration of Austrian Masonry by Rosicrucianism and other esoteric tendencies. For example, Tobias Freiherr von Gebler, Grand Master of the district lodge Zum neuen Bund, wrote as follows in a letter of February 1785:

> The new organization of St. John's lodges, created with the foreknowledge of our Monarch and arranged into provinces and districts under a supreme National Lodge, has as its aim the exclusion of all Rosicrucian and magical fanaticism. Our

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[7] *Ibid.*, p. 190-91.

[8] *Georg Forsters Tagebücher*, edited by Paul Zincke and Albert Leitzmann (Berlin, B. Behr, 1914), p. 193. Linder is mentioned as master of the Beständigkeit by Eva Huber in her article "Zur Sozialstruktur der Wiener Logen im Josephinischen Jahrzehnt", in *Aufklärung und Geheimgesellschaften*, edited by Helmut Reinalter (Munich, Oldenbourg, 1989), p. 180.

> enlightened [*erleuchteter*] ruler wants nothing to do with these, nor with the influence of foreign, even *si Diis placet* unknown, superiors, who, to speak frankly, are imposters and maliciously cunning intriguers. Certainly we have in our circles all too many gold-seekers and, to a certain extent, also spiritualists, but these now have their heads bowed.[9]

The year 1785 was also marked by the appearance of another exposé, *Die theoretischen Brüder oder zweite Stuffe der Rosenkreuzer und Ihrer Instruktion*. Published anonymously, it is attributed to one Count von Löhrbach.[10] The book includes the second-degree ritual of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz as well as sections of the third and fifth degrees, preceded by a satirical dialogue which savagely attacks the Rosicrucians. Perhaps following the example of Montesquieu in his *Lettres persanes* (though without Montesquieu's literary skill), Löhrbach presents the dialogue as a translation from a Persian manuscript. The participants are the Sultan Schach Gebal, his wife or concubine Nurmahal and the "philosopher" Danischmende.

The dialogue opens with Schach Gebal asking what the Rosicrucians are, and Danischmende begins his reply by giving a historical account of initiatory traditions that corresponds exactly to Weishaupt's teaching on the subject. Since early in the history of humankind, he explains, men of superior understanding have banded together and, prompted by philanthropic motives, have passed their insights on to carefully chosen cohorts with the intention of removing superstition and refining customs. This, he says, was the aim of such figures as Osiris, Orpheus and Zoroaster. (Thus the same figures who are invoked by the Rosicrucians as great initiates of the past are here presented as proto-*Aufklärer*.) He goes on to say that these wise men employed rituals and ceremonies, but only to stimulate people's curiosity and lead them to wisdom and virtue. The Rosicrucians, however, misused and warped these initiatory traditions for their own fanatical, superstitious and deceitful ends. The Sultan asks if there are Rosicrucians in his kingdom, and Danischmende replies in the affirmative. If there are Jesuits, he says, then why not Rosicrucians?—for the two share the same aims and were recently united. It emerges that the local Circle Director of the Rosicrucians is one Aeschmann, and he is duly summoned, "a small, misshapen man of dark yellow complexion in a greasy, dirty leather garment". The Sultan asks Aeschmann to carry out an alchemical transmutation, but the latter refuses to do so in the presence of "the profane", and the Sultan has him flogged. Nurmahal asks if there is any means of protecting people from such fanaticism, and Danischmende replies that the only

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[9] Quoted by Eva Huber, *Ibid.*

[10] *Die theoretischen Brüder oder zweite Stuffe der Rosenkreutzer und ihrer Instruktion das erstenmal ans Licht herausgegeben von einem Prophanen* ("Athen: zur Zeit der Aufklärung", i.e. Regensburg, Montag und Weiss, 1785, re-issued 1789). See Wolfstieg, entry 42518.

remedy is philosophy which, "quietly disseminated, will illuminate the age and set reason alight in human beings". He also urges that all sovereigns who care about the welfare of their subjects should forbid the further dissemination of obscurantist teachings. The Sultan thereupon agrees to issue a decree banning the publication of alchemical works and orders the existing ones to be burned.[11]

This dialogue brings together many favourite themes of the German *Aufklärer* of this period; there is the enlightened despot (Schach Gebal), guided towards wise policies based on reason by his philosopher (Danischmende); and there is the Rosicrucian villain (Aeschmann), representing all the forces of darkness, reaction, irrationality, superstition and deception. And once again there is the claim that the Rosicrucians and Jesuits are in alliance. Danischmende deplores the "iron despotism" with which the Rosicrucians' irrational teachings are linked, and talks of the persecution visited upon those who leave the order. How seriously, we may ask, was such anti-Rosicrucian propaganda taken? We know that Forster, for one, believed in the Jesuit link and was afraid of persecution for his desertion. It seems likely, therefore, that there were others who would take Löhrbach's message to heart.

In the same year, 1785, the Gold- und Rosenkreuz was the subject of an exchange in the pages of the *Aufklärung* journal, the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*.[12] The January issue included an extract from an anonymous letter claiming that Roman Catholicism was gradually spreading itself into the Protestant parts of Germany through the efforts of secret propagandists. The writer supported his argument with a story about a Protestant clergyman who had become a member of a secret brotherhood. After passing through the first seven grades, he had consented to receive the seven-fold ordination of the Roman priesthood from a Catholic bishop who was a member of the brotherhood, in order to be admitted to the eighth grade. After the ceremony the bishop delivered a speech to the candidate in which he told him that Protestant orders did not stem from the Apostles and that only in the Catholic Church was the true apostolic succession to be found. Although the name of the order was not mentioned, the descriptions of its procedures made it quite clear that it was the Gold- und Rosenkreuz that was being referred to. In the April number of the journal a reply was published from someone signing himself T***y. He attacked the spirit of the *Aufklärung*, defended the Catholic Church and demanded that the name and address of the Protestant clergyman be revealed. The correspondence continued in the August issue with a letter that later turned out to be from a certain von Reibnitz of Glogau. This writer described how he had been admitted to the Rosicrucian order more than 12 years pre-

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[11] *Op. cit.*, pp. 5-43.

[12] The letters of January, April and August referred to are summarized by Santing, pp. 249-51.

viously, had attained the degree of Magus and had served for a time as Circle Director. He related how it had come to his attention that an alchemical manuscript, sent out by the Superiors as a highly secret document, had in fact been copied, complete with printer's errors, from an old alchemical book. Furthermore, he discovered that the alchemy of the Unknown Superiors was of no value and that, after reaching the highest degree, he was no wiser than before he was initiated. The result was that, the higher a member rose, the more discontented he became. From what one knew of the Unknown Superiors, they appeared to be Catholics.[13] Although he had discerned no trace of Catholicism in his circle, he had noticed that members of high standing were favourably disposed towards Catholicism and were in correspondence with Catholics.

The *Berlinische Monatschrift* also published, in 1785 and the first issue of 1786, an exchange of letters (in effect lengthy articles) between the Breslau philosopher and prominent *Aufklärer*, Christian Garve, and J.E. Biester, who edited the journal together with F. Gedicke.[14] The two men were friends and shared the same devotion to the *Aufklärung*. Garve, however, took a less alarmist view about secret societies than did Biester. The former was not a member of any secret society or masonic lodge, whereas the latter was a member of the Berlin Mittwochgesellschaft (an influential *Aufklärung* discussion group which was obliged to operate in secrecy), a freemason and moreover, along with Gedike and Wöllner, a member of the grand lodge Zu den Drei Weltkugeln which, as has been mentioned, had a strong Gold- und Rosenkreuz element within it.[15] It was understandable that Biester, as a mason of the *Aufklärung* type, should have had a strong aversion to the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, an aversion that was evidently increased rather than diminished by the fact that there were Rosicrucians in his own lodge. The exchange between these two men vividly illustrates two different types of *Aufklärung* reaction to the Gold- und Rosenkreuz and its *Weltanschauung*.

In reply to a claim by Biester that the Catholics, especially the Jesuits, were using Martinism and similar theosophical tendencies as a vehicle for gaining converts, Garve published an article in which he deplored the obscurantism of Saint-Martin's *Des Erreurs et de la vérité* and other such examples of fanaticism but declared that Biester was wrong to imagine that the Jesuits were using such tendencies to proselytize. Garve affirmed that he was a Protestant and in favour of freedom of thought but said that he did not share Biester's

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[13] Santing states (p. 251, footnote) that Keller and Jägern were Catholics and that Schleiβ von Löwenfeld became one.

[14] The relevant pages are reproduced in facsimile in *Was ist Aufklärung? Beiträge aus der Berlinischen Monatsschrift*, selected, introduced and with notes by Norbert Hinske (Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981).

[15] *Ibid.*, Introduction, p. LXVIII.

fears. How, he asked, could the Jesuits be any real threat when they had lost their worldly power and now had to operate in secret? He declared:

> I do not fear that which takes place so secretly, just as, admittedly, I do not place much hope in it. It is only power that I fear; and it is only in the *Aufklärung* and in truth, openly and clearly shown to everyone, that I place any hope. Let fanatics and superstitious people gang together; as long as they have no soldiers at their command I shall remain unperturbed.[16]

In his response, Biester declares that Garve is too optimistic in his belief in the power of the *Aufklärung*, which is restricted to a small group of people and leaves millions untouched. Garve, being the well-meaning and enlightened person that he is, too readily believes that other people are the same. Biester, however, knows from his own work for the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek*, how many alchemical, theosophical and kabbalistic works are being read in Germany. Looking back into history, Biester deplores the way in which the "nonsense of the Neo-Platonic philosophy" prevailed over the true, pure philosophy of the ancient world and took over both paganism and Christianity. He repeats his accusations about the Jesuits and, in what is obviously a reference to the Crown Prince Frederick William II, he writes:

> Is it not possible that a prince might be taught by ignoble and unenlightened people in such a way that he does not receive the same knowledge and education [as Frederick the Great]? Is it not possible that his natural talents might be so weak that even the best upbringing fails to strengthen them? ... You know that many private citizens enter secret societies and apply themselves eagerly to all kinds of fanatical beliefs [*Schwärmereien*—a favourite term of abuse among the *Aufklärer*.] Is it not possible, then, that a prince in order to become the head of an order, or out of love of magnificence and ceremony, or out of other motives, should commit himself to the most suspect associations?

Biester goes on to suggest that such a prince, wishing to combat the *Aufklärung* might easily join forces with Catholicism.[17]

Garve, in his reply, concedes some of Biester's points, but continues to deny that secret societies can have substantially dangerous influence. In all of history, he says, no great revolution in politics, thought or customs has ever been brought about by secret societies. Referring to the report about the Gold- und Rosenkreuz in the August issue, he finds their practices absurd but cannot see how they can exert much practical influence. Blind obedience may be the first rule of the order, but how, he asks, can it be maintained?[18]

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[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 182-230.
[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 231-253.
[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 254-295.

Biester's final reply is divided into two parts, which appeared in the December issue of 1785 and the January issue of 1786. In the second part he refers with satisfaction to the fact that *Berlinische Monatsschrift* has brought the menace of secret societies to the attention of sensible people. The article in the August issue about the Gold- und Rosenkreuz (which he now names) was, he says, the most important thing that has yet been written about secret societies in Germany. Expressing astonishment at Garve's unconcern about the order, he writes:

> What? That the news of an order whose membership runs to 8,000, including many upright, pious, worthy, Christian people and many distinguished, noble and honourable men of all stations in life from the highest to the lowest, an order which is totally ruled by unknown superiors ... that the mere report of the real existence of such an order should not be of the utmost importance to every patriot and friend of humanity? A man such as Garve will deny this! The news of an order which, through blind obedience, seeks to cripple free thought and sound human understanding ... which introduces Catholic hocus-pocus [*katholische Gaukeleien*] for the furthering of this blind obedience and to the detriment of the Protestant religion; which in all probability was invented by Jesuits ... that the news of such an order should not make the most disturbing impression on every Protestant who loves his religion ...?

Biester goes on to quote mockingly some Rosicrucian writing on cosmogeny from the exposé *Die Theoretischen Brüder*.[19]

Thus, by 1785 the Gold- und Rosenkreuz was suffering both from external attacks and from internal dissension. In an attempt to confront the latter, Wöllner issued a work entitled the *Hirtenbrief*, published in 1785[20] (although it was published anonymously, Wöllner is now generally acknowledged to have been the author). Criticizing the unruly brethren, Wöllner writes:

> Our sacred brotherhood has for some time suffered the misfortune of counting, here and there among its members, individuals who have forgotten what they owe to the man who holds the fate of the whole order, indeed of the whole of humankind, in his hands. ... These unfortunate ones fail to perceive the light at high noon.[21]

He also berates the brethren for being too selfishly concerned with the outcome of their alchemical work, instead of remembering the higher aim of such work. The *Hirtenbrief* is essentially an appeal to the brethren to be faithful to the true and lofty principles of the order. It did little or nothing, however, to hold back the rising tide of discontent.

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[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 296-320.

[20] *Hirtenbrief an die wahren und ächten Freymaurer alten Systems* (5785, i.e. 1785, no place of publication given).

[21] *Ibid.*, p. iii.

As we have seen, this discontent stemmed partly from unfulfilled expectations of alchemical secrets and partly from a growing mistrust *vis-à-vis* the Unknown Superiors and a suspicion of their Jesuit connections, sentiments that were fuelled by the campaign of defamation against the Rosicrucians. Equally and possibly more serious, however, in its damage to the Gold- und Rosenkreuz was the campaign carried out by the order itself against the Illuminati. This campaign, as we have seen (Chapter 8), started in 1783 when circulars began to be issued to the members urging them to oppose the Illuminati. There were, however, certain members who found these circulars obnoxious. One who reacted in this way was von Röpert, who is revealed in his correspondence (quoted in Chapter 5) to have been a high-ranking and dedicated member of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. It was he who had written to the prospective initiate Maltzahn, emphasizing the need for total and unqualified trust and punctilious obedience to the order's commands. Yet on 2 April 1786 he wrote a letter to Wöllner, expressing his disquiet. The whereabouts of the original version of this letter are not known, but Nettelbladt and Santing both quote it, reproducing different passages but assigning it the same date. Thus, while it cannot be treated with total certainty, it can at least be introduced as tentative evidence. The letter, as quoted by Nettelbladt,[22] begins by referring to those who are "storming the order from all sides, making its situation so critical that probably it has never, since its inception, felt itself to be so closely spied upon". He refers to "this system, which has been so widely extended for the past nine years and which has beckoned people so invitingly towards magic, alchemy, statecraft and piety", and continues: "It is evident that this period is near its end ... in so far as ... these occult sciences, with which the Superiors managed to hold together the whole group for nine years in vain expectation, will hardly suffice to cement the society for the next ten years." He goes on to express his anxiety that Catholic brethren are being manipulated by the Jesuits.

Another passage from the letter, quoted by Santing, reads:

> I assure you before God that I have no ulterior or evil motives, but: (1) Is it true that we are not Jesuits, and if, as I assume, this is is still understood to be the case,
> (2) how can and should the proceedings against the Illuminati be answered for, indeed justified?
> And now follow certain complaints that could in themselves have been voiced a long time ago.
> (3) Can it be justified that, from the Junior grade to the 8th grade only chemistry is practised?

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22 C.C.F.W. von Nettelbladt, *Geschichte Freimaurerischer Systeme* (Berlin, Mittler, 1879; reprinted Walluf bei Wiesbaden, Martin Sandig, 1972), pp. 549-51.

> (4) Of whom can you say with certainty that he has produced the lapis? Let us sit down and come to an agreement. ... But this requires an open heart, no concealment and no rejection of that which merely smacks of another point of view. ... It also requires no postulating and no assuming of things that cannot be accepted with certainty by both sides on the basis of historical fact and the application of common human intelligence.[23]

Coming from a prominent member of the order, this letter is startling, especially the last sentence, which casts aside the whole epistemological foundation of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. The case of Röpert (like that of Forster and Sömmering) shows that up to a certain point in time it was possible to belong to the order, and indeed play a leading part in it, without holding the standard anti-*Aufklärung* position. By the mid 1780s, however, this had been rendered difficult by the increasingly polarized climate of the age and by way in which the order, in its utterances and actions and in the way it was portrayed, had become associated with an extreme anti-*Aufklärung* stance. Now individuals such as Röpert were being forced to choose their camp, and in Röpert's case rejecting the order's political extremism also meant questioning its esoteric claims.

To make matters worse for the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, there were disagreements with the Russian branch of the order, whose head, Johann Georg Schwarz, had died in 1784. In May 1786 his successor, von Schröder, and other leading members of the Russian branch wrote to Wöllner accusing him of deception. Accounts of the affair (see also Chapter 9) do not specify what precisely the complaints were, but Schröder evidently followed up the letter by travelling to Berlin in January 1787 and submitting to Wöllner a list of 117 grievances, which were in due course, as Wöllner informed him, passed on to the Unknown Superiors.[24]

In an attempt to assuage the discontent, the Unknown Superiors announced that towards the end of 1787 a General Convention would be held at which members would be given clarification. In 1787 the order was in any case due for one of its ten-yearly "reformations". Instead what the Superiors did was to declare a "Silanum", that is a suspension of all lodge workings until further notice. Although they left open the possibility of a resumption of activities, they subsequently never made any announcement to this affect. This was not quite the end of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, for the activities of the Rosicrucian clique in Berlin were only just beginning when the Silanum took place (evidently Wöllner and his friends were able to exempt themselves from the Sila-

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[23] Santing, p. 252, and Arnold Marx, *Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, pp. 127-8.
[24] Santing, pp. 252-3.

num), but for most of the membership the Silanum signalled the collapse of the order as they had known it.[25]

In Austria the order lingered on for a few more years, despite the *Freimaurerpatent* of 1785. Especially after the accession of Leopold II in 1790, it appears that the Viennese Rosicrucians were able to carry on unmolested. But on 7 April 1792 the Superiors evidently issued a final declaration that the order had ceased to exist. This was reported in an announcement that appeared in the *Wiener Zeitschrift* the following year under the title *Manifest der unbekannten Ordens-Obern an die Glieder geheimer Grade und Systeme*, which declared: "We are withdrawing. We are destroying the building at the same time as we are eliminating the cleft in it."[26]

The fact that this announcement appeared in the Wiener Zeitschrift is interesting, since it suggests that the paper's editor, Leopold Alois Hoffmann, had been in some way involved in the Gold- und Rosenkreuz but was now giving approval to its dissolution. Hoffmann came to oppose the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, perhaps as a disenchanted former member, but for reasons diametrically opposite to those of the *Aufklärer*, for Hoffmann believed that the order had in fact become a tool of the *Aufklärer*. This bizarre view is made clear in Hoffmann's work *Aktenmässige Darstellungen der Deutschen Union, und ihrer Verbindung mit dem Illuminaten-Freimaurer und Rosenkreuzer-Orden*.[27] Here Hoffmann claims that the order had been infiltrated by the Illuminati. He refers to the "corruption and apostasy" that have plagued the order for the past five or six years, then goes on to quote parts of an alleged correspondence in which a junior member of the order questions a senior member about what has happened to the order. The latter writes: "You and I and many others have been cheated." The *Aufklärer*, he says, have pursued a double strategy, on the one hand working through such subversive groups as the Illuminati and on the other hand seeking to undermine and corrupt the Rosicrucians and other forces of virtue by tainting them with deception and occultist fanaticism. The Rosicrucians and the Strict Observance are, he says, now controlled by the Illuminati. "It would, for example, not be improbable that a sovereign, a minister or a general who belonged to the Strict Observance or the Rosicrucians could be sitting unawares next to a Superior of the Illuminati." In this way the Illuminati could easily come into possession of military secrets.[28]

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[25] *Ibid.*, p. 253.

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 253-4.

[27] Leopold Alois Hoffmann, *Aktenmässige Darstellung der Deutschen Union, und ihrer Verbindung mit dem Illuminaten-Freimaurer und Rosenkreuzer-Orden* (Vienna, Rehm, 1796).

[28] *Op. cit.*, pp. 131-145.

Hoffmann, however, consciously or unconsciously, paid the Gold- und Rosenkreuz the compliment of imitation when he planned an alternative anti-*Aufklärung* secret society. This had the backing of Leopold II but never came to anything.[29]

Thus the Gold- und Rosenkreuz came to a less than glorious end, riven with dissension, abandoned alike by enlightened members and by conservatives such as Hoffmann, and with its image tainted by unsavoury publicity. The Rosicrucian revival as a whole, however, was to remain alive, thanks partly to a splinter group of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, which will be examined later. Next, however, we shall follow the Rosicrucian current into eastern territories.

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[29] J.M. Roberts, *The Mythology of the Secret Societies* (London, Secker and Warburg, 1972), p. 215.

CHAPTER NINE

ROSICRUCIANISM IN POLAND AND RUSSIA

It was not only in the German-speaking world that the Rosicrucian revival had an impact. Its reverberations were also felt in Poland and Russia, where German influences mingled with French high-degree Masonry. Because the Gold- und Rosenkreuz played a part in the transmission of these influences, it is appropriate to cast an eye at the Polish and Russian manifestations of Rosicrucianism. A disclaimer must, however, be made here. Without the capacity to use Polish and Russian primary sources, it has been necessary to rely on secondary sources. What follows must therefore be seen as a cautious attempt to show how this aspect of the Rosicrucian revival fits into the general picture.

In Poland and Russia, as in Germany, we find a complex intermingling of Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment currents, of rationalism and mysticism, and of the humanist and theosophical strains in Freemasonry. A figure in whom this ambivalence is strikingly exemplified is King Stanislas Augustus Poniatowski (1732-98), who reigned as the last Polish monarch from 1764 to 1795. Stanislas is generally seen as an enlightened ruler. Well educated and influenced by the French *philosophes*, he promoted, among other things, religious toleration and a reform of the educational system.[1] At the same time he had a strong penchant for esoteric pursuits. In this he was much influenced by a soldier of fortune and freemason from Switzerland named Lucas de Toux de Salverte, who had instructed the young Stanislas in military matters,[2] and by Count August Moszynski, both of whom were alchemists. Both are also reported to have been Rosicrucians, and indeed Moszynski is said to have been the head of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz in Poland and Lithuania.[3] With the financial support of the King, Moszynski and Toux set up an alchemical laboratory in the Ujazdowski palace, where they carried out a series of experiments, during one of which a fire broke out, causing serious damage to the palace.[4] In 1768 Moszynski wrote a manuscript treatise addressed to the King entitled *Réflexions sur la science hermétique*. Further-

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1 See Jean Fabre, *Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski et l'Europe des Lumières* (Paris, Institut d'Etudes Slaves, 1952).

2 *Ibid.*, p. 169.

3 Ludwik Hass, *Sekta farmazonii warszwskiej. Pierwsze stulecie wolnomularstwa w Warszawie (1721-1821)* (Warsaw, Panstwowy Instytut Wadawniczy, 1980), p. 157, note 59.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 157.

more, Stanislas's own papers contain numerous allusions to alchemy and other esoteric matters.[5]

In 1777 Stanislas became a freemason, joining the German-affiliated lodge Karl zu den drei Helmen, led by Reichsgraf Aloïs von Brühl, brother of Karl Adolf von Brühl (see above, Chapter 9). The Brühls were a distinguished family with connections in both Saxony and Poland (1772), and both brothers were active in high-degree Masonry.[6] Stanislas's choice of a lodge with German rather than French connections was somewhat surprising in view of the recent Prussian seizure of part of Poland, but Fabre, in his biography of Stanislas, sees the move as a way of "extending a hand to the adversary to make him a friend".[7]

Upon entering the lodge, the King was, according to Fabre "promoted immediately to Chevalier Rose-Croix, brother of the 21st degree, under the symbolic names of Eques Salsinatus and Salsinatus Magnus."[8] Other sources also declare that Stanislas was a "Rosicrucian".[9] It was entirely in keeping with Stanislas's esoteric interests, and possibly with his Enlightenment ones as well, that he should have become a Rosicrucian, but it is not so easy to determine which variety of Rosicrucianism he joined.

In Poland, various currents of Rosicrucianism were present, including the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. In his study of Freemasonry in Warsaw, Ludwik Hass writes:

> In Warsaw the circles of the Order of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz were founded in the mid-1770s. ... The head of the organization in Warsaw was, with the title of "Justitiarius", Lieutenant General of the Guards, Count Karl Adolf von Brühl. ...
>
> Other high dignitaries of Freemasonry entered the circles of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, such as ... the official of the Mint, Georg Anton Schroeder, and the officer of the Horse Artillery, Georg Schlicht. ... Another Gold- und Rosenkreuzer was Samuel Okraszewski, the first Pole to follow the example of the Montgolfier brothers in experimenting with air balloons. Besides them, this small body (probably fewer than 20 people) included foreigners such as Captain Andrzej Putz, Lieutenant Colonel of the Royal Guard, Stettner, and one Huldacop (the Frenchman Soren), who died ... as a victim of asphyxia in the alchemical laboratory.[10]

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5 Fabre, pp. 282-3. Fabre notes that the King's papers, including the Moszynski treatise, are now preserved at Cracow in the library formerly belonging to the Czartoryski family.

6 Lennhoff and Posner, *Internationales Freimaurer-Lexikon*, p. 227.

7 Fabre, p. 497.

8 *Ibid.*

9 Lennhoff and Posner, *Internationales Freimaurer-Lexikon*, p. 1224.

10 Ludwik Hass, *Sekta farmazonii warszwskiej.*, p. 157. Hass lists as his sources J.G. Forster's travel diaries, and S. Malachowski-Lempicki, "Rozokrzyzowcy polscy wieku XVIII-go", in *Przeglad Powszechny*, Vol. 185, Jan.-March, 1930 (Krakow).

Georg Forster in his diaries also records meeting "Huldacop" in Warsaw and identifies him as a Rosicrucian, although the editors of the diary identify Huldacop as one Paul Goltz, an official of Prince Adam Czartoryski.[11]

Apart from the Gold- und Rosenkreuz circles, there was another system being practised in Poland, known as the Bon Pasteur, which also had a Rosicrucian character. This is reported to have been founded by Toux de Salverte in about 1750, that is to say even before the probable foundation of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz.[12] Lennhoff and Posner's masonic lexicon has this to say about the system:

> "Lodges bearing the name "Bon Pasteur" were found in Warsaw and Wilna around 1750. From these originally fairly normal lodges there developed an idiosyncratic mystic-kabbalistic system of 12 degrees, which in many respects is close to that of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. This system appears to have remained confined to Poland. ..."[13]

The doctrine and liturgy of the Bon Pasteur system is revealed in a manuscript, written partly in French and partly in Latin, which came to light in Vienna and was published in a German translation in 1926 with an introduction by M.Thalmann.[14] Like other high-grade rites, the Bon Pasteur considered the three Craft degrees and the degree of Scottish Master to be a preliminary stage. Hence the grades of the system start at number five and are as follows:

5. Chevalier du Soleil.
6. Chevalier de la Rose-Croix.
7. Prince Chevalier de la Croix d'Or.
8. Matre Intérieur du Temple.
9. Erhabener Philosoph.
10. Ordre des Chevaliers Hospitaliers de Christ et du Temple de Salomon.
11. Architect Souverain ou Philosoph du premier Ordre.
12. Frater Operator.[15]

Like the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, the Bon Pasteur system is characterized by a pietistic type of Christianity with a gnostic, dualistic colouring, which is immediately apparent from the symbolic picture shown to initiates of the fifth

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[11] *Georg Forsters Tagebücher*, edited by Paul Zincke and Albert Leitzmann (Berlin, Behr, 1914), pp. 218 and 382.

[12] Stanislas Malachowski-Lempicki, "Rozokrzyzowcy polscy" (see note 10), p. 76. Rafal Prinke of Poznan has kindly supplied me with a summary of this article.

[13] Lennhoff and Posner, p. 207.

[14] M. Thalmann, "Das System der Loge 'du Bon Pasteur'", in *Das Freimaurer-Museum*, Vol. 2 (Leipzig, Bruno Zechel, 1926). Thalmann states that the manuscript was lodged in the Hofbibliothek.

[15] *Op. cit.*, p. 114.

grade. This depicts a temple portico with the pillars Jachin and Boaz, on the steps of which stands a man carrying a lamb. Above the portico are various emblems including a sun and moon, a globe traversed by a river and bearing words "Lux ex Tenebris", and a cross entwined by two serpents. According to the explanation given to candidates, the man with the lamb represents the Bon Pasteur, the Good Shepherd, who seeks the sheep who have strayed in order to bring them back to his herd. Similarly, erring brethren should be brought back to the path of goodness. "To this end," the text explains "we should make use of kindness, tenderness, benevolence and all the resources of reason and brotherly love."[16]

The explanation continues:

> The globe represents the world in which we live. It is composed of infertile matter, which must be continually washed by the surrounding waters in order to be fertile and to bring forth those fruits which, despite daily study, we know so little of. It is the symbol of the greediness of our bodies. ...
>
> The words Lux ex Tenebris signify that the man who is illuminated by reason can easily pass through the darkness of ignorance and superstition. These words also show us that the light shines in the darkness, but the darkness comprehends it not. God speaks to us through the spirit, which is the highest light. But man is the prey of darkness, ignorance and error and does not understand this language. ...
>
> The river which runs through the world represents the usefulness of the passions, which, during the course of life, are necessary, as the water is to the earth, to bring fruitfulness. But one should not interpret this literally. It is precisely through struggling against these passions that we learn to conquer them and release ourselves from the world and its corruption, in order to live a holy life in the incorruptible realm. The light must rise out of the darkness, and our souls, having received and recognized the true light, must allow themselves to be led by the heavenly spirit. ... Thus the fruits of the spirit are life and purity, while the fruits of the body are earthly death and destruction.[17]

While this passage is steeped in the dualistic, world-denying view that is so familiar in neo-Rosicrucian literature, one is struck by the fact that twice the word "reason" (*Vernunft*) is used in a positive sense. In the first instance it is coupled with brotherly love, and in the second it is linked with the image of light and is seen as the means of "passing through the darkness of ignorance and superstition", words that could easily have been written by the most ardent *Aufklärer*. Arguably this is not simply a case of two opposing parties trying to appropriate the same vocabulary and images. As we have seen when discussing the philosophy of the *Aufklärung*, many of the *Aufklärer* saw reason not just as a means of cognition but as an actual moral force capable of elevating and improving human beings. An *Aufklärer* who held this view might well feel

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[16] *Ibid.*, p. 128.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 128-9.

that he shared common ground with the author of the Bon Pasteur text, even though he might reject the more esoteric aspects of the Bon Pasteur doctrine. Hence it does not take a great stretch of the imagination to see how someone like King Stanislas could have had a foot in both the Rosicrucian and the Enlightenment camps.

As with the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, the symbolism of alchemy played an important part in the Bon Pasteur system, and the images shown in the picture are also given an alchemical meaning. The sun, for example, is "the primal, unified matter for our great work, which penetrates everything and lives in everything", while the two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, are "the basis on which the whole chemical structure is built, namely ☉ (gold) and ☽ (silver), the male and the female, the superior and inferior, the active and passive, whose united strength makes everything possible."[18] This last quotation is strikingly similar to the interpretation given to the two pillars in the instructions for the grade of Practicus in the Gold- und Rosenkreuz: "The two pillars I and B ... represent eternity and time, male and female, the two inextinguishable seeds, the passive and active parts of nature and creation."[19]

Other Gold- und Rosenkreuz echoes are found in the seventh grade, that of Prince Chevalier de la Croix d'Or. The information accompanying this grade includes a list of rules headed "The old laws and statutes of the wise brethren of the exalted Golden and Rosy Cross in the year 1624". On examination, this list proves to bear a close resemblance to the rules listed in the manuscript entitled *Testamentum der Fraternität Roseae et Aureae Crucis* (see above, Chapter 2), which in turn resembles the list of rules given by Sincerus Renatus. The similarities, as well as variations, can be seen in the following quotations:

> Bon Pasteur
> 1. The Brotherhood, which originally consisted on 23 members, must increase to 63 ... unless decided otherwise by a majority decision of the Chapter or a higher authority.
> 2. No fanatic, bigot or godless person should be accepted, but only true Christians who are capable of the rebirth without which entry into the heavenly kingdom is impossible. Thus, either one can accept all Christians or, in view of the disharmony caused by religious differences in the past, one could choose to accept only Protestants. It was decided to choose the more tolerable of two evils ... and so Catholics were accepted in order to show that we harbour antipathy towards no one.
> 3. Our Imperator shall hold his office for life.
> 4. He shall possess an exact list with the names of all brethren, with age, date of acceptance, address and country, in case they need to be contacted and helped. ...

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[18] *Ibid.*, p. 129-30.

[19] Bernhard Beyer, *Das Lehrsystem der Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, p. 111.

19. As we lost two brethren in Vienna in 1641 because they were incautious enough to make themselves known to profane people and in particular to certain Jesuits, it is strongly prohibited to receive or support any Austrian. ...[20]

Testamentum

1. As long as Providence allows the Brotherhood to continue, the number of brethren shall not be increased beyond 77. ...
2. There should be no jealousy between us on account of any religious question, but rather each should permit his brother to follow his own belief and be true to his own conscience ... so that no hatred may arise among us. ...
3. After the death of the Imperator another shall be chosen, and the brethren shall be obedient and loyal to him, as to his predecessor, until his life's end. ...
4. The Imperator must have each brother's name listed, along with the place where he lives, so that the brethren can come to each other's aid in case of need. ...
24. Nor should a brother reveal anything about his riches to anyone; especially should he guard against all religious, for these masquerade as high priests but carry the Devil in their hearts. ... Thus in 1641 in Austria we lost two of our brethren because they were too open-hearted with people of this ilk.[21]

The most likely common source of these two sets of rules is Sincerus Renatus's *Die wahrhaffte und volkommene Bereitung des Philosophischen Steins der Brüderschafft* (1710), which contains a list of statutes that closely parallels the two lists quoted above, both in the numbering of corresponding items and in details such as that of the two brethren who were lost in Austria through incautious speech.[22] Another possibility is that all three sets of rules stemmed from a common ancestor. In any event, what is interesting is the way in which various versions of this list of statutes are invoked by widely scattered groups professing a Rosicrucian allegiance. The Bon Pasteur can thus be seen as a Polish offshoot of the same stream to which the Gold- und Rosenkreuz belonged, albeit the grades and rituals are different.

Thus it appears that there were at least two Rosicrucian, or Rosicrucian-oriented, factions active in Poland: the Bon Pasteur and the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. Which one of these King Stanislas joined is difficult to determine. If it is correct, as Fabre says, that he became a "Chevalier Rose Croix" with the symbolic name of Eques Salsinatus, then the order referred to cannot have been the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, since chivalric grades were not part of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz system. He might, however, have joined a Gold- und Rosenkreuz circle separately, since it was common to belong to several rites at the same time. The Polish circles of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, according to

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[20] Thalmann, pp. 167-9.

[21] *Testamentum der Fraternität Roseae et Aureae Crucis*, manuscript in Oesterrichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Cod. Ser. n. 2897. Reproduced in Archarion, *Von wahrer Alchemie* (Freiburg-im-Breisgau, Hermann Bauer, 1967), pp. 157-9.

[22] *Op. cit.*, pp. 100ff.

Hass, died out when the order in Germany, as we have seen, declared a Silanum, that is to say a suspension of all lodge activities, in 1787.[23] What became of the Bon Pasteur is uncertain.

Turning to Russia, we find once again Rosicrucian elements in evidence. Freemasonry reached Russia in 1731, with the establishment of an English Provincial Grand Lodge at St. Petersburg, and grew steadily over the next few decades, with masonic systems of various different national allegiances—English, Prussian and Swedish—jostling for control of Russian masonry.[24] An important event was the initiation in 1775 of the journalist and publisher Nikolai Ivanovich Novikov (1744-1818),[25] one of the most ardent promoters of the Enlightenment in Russia, who fought tirelessly as a publicist against official corruption, cruelty towards serfs and other abuses.[26] Another key event was the arrival in Moscow in 1779 of a mason named Johann Georg Schwarz (c.1751-1784), a Transylvanian German who quickly established himself as an educational expert and teacher of philosophy and German language.[27] Schwarz formed a close friendship and partnership with Novikov and joined the Society of Learned Friends, which Novikov had founded and which became a focal point of intellectual life in Moscow.[28]

In 1781 the Moscow masonic community entrusted Schwarz with a mission to Germany, whose purpose was to free the Russian lodges from the Swedish hegemony under which they had fallen and to establish a direct connection with German high-grade Masonry. Schwarz's route took him through Königsberg, where he stopped to pay a visit to the anti-*Aufklärung* writer J.G. Hamann, the "Magus of the North".[29] Reaching Berlin at the beginning of October, he made contact with Wöllner, who initiated him into the Gold- und Rosenkreuz.[30] Soon afterwards he met Duke Ferdinand von Braunschweig, Grand Master of all Scottish lodges in Germany, who agreed to the independence of the Russian lodges. At some stage Schwarz also came under the influence of Jean-Baptiste Willermoz with his Chevaliers Bienfaisants de la Cité Sainte, known also as the Lyon System.[31] Thanks in large measure to Schwarz, this system, together with the ideas of Saint-Martin that were asso-

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[23] Hass, *Sekta farmazonii warszwskiej*, p. 228.

[24] Georg von Rauch, "Johann Georg Schwarz und die Freimaurer in Moskau", in *Beförderer der Aufklärung in Mittel- und Osteuropa*, edited by Eva H. Balázs, Ludwig Hammermayer, Hans Wagner and Jerzy Wojtowicz (Berlin, Ulrich Camen), p. 213.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] Lennhoff and Posner, pp. 1134-5.

[27] Rauch, p. 214.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 215.

[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 215-6.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 216.

[31] Antoine Faivre, *Eckartshausen et la théosophie chrétienne* (Paris, Klincksieck, 1969), p. 620.

ciated with it, were widely adopted in Russia, and the loose concept of "Martinism" became fashionable. Novikov himself became an initiate to the degree of Chevalier Bienfaisant de la Cité Sainte, the highest grade of the Lyon System.[32]

Subsequently, following the 1782 Wihelmsbad Convention, Russia became the Seventh Province (i.e. masonic jurisdiction), with Novikov as President and Schwarz as Chancellor.[33] In addition, Schwarz, who returned to Moscow early in 1782, was evidently made head of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz system in Russia. As such he was subordinate to the Berlin headquarters of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz and was obliged to send reports of the organization and the fees collected from members.[34] This was just the time when the Rosicrucians were attempting to take advantage of the lacuna created by the downfall of the Strict Observance, and in Russia Schwarz was able to convince some of the high initiates of the Strict Observance about the superiority of the Rosicrucian system.[35]

At his home in Moscow, Schwarz held a series of Sunday lectures, whose theosophical tenor places him firmly in the Rosicrucian tradition of thought. The doctrines conveyed by Schwarz included many that we have already encountered in the works of Rosicrucian writers and in the Gold- und Rosenkreuz teachings, such as the notion of the creation of the world through a series of emanations from God, and the idea of an invisible hierarchy of spirits. Writers who influenced him included Thomas à Kempis, Johann Arndt, Angelus Silesius and Jakob Boehme, and, among contemporaries, Lavater and Hamann. From this standpoint, Schwarz attacked the French *philosophes* and helped to swell the reaction against the influence of French rationalism in Russia.[36] His eloquent promotion of German literature also helped to make Russia receptive to the German classics, the Sturm und Drang and the Romantic movement.[37]

Schwarz's Moscow activities were cut short in 1783 when he left the city, evidently for reasons of deteriorating health, to stay in the nearby village of Ochakovo as the guest of his patron Prince Trubetskoi. Here he died in February 1784 at the age of 33.[38]

After Schwarz's death the Rosicrucian-Martinist impulse was continued by Novikov, not least through his publishing activities. Novikov is an intriguing

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[32] *Ibid.*, note 329.

[33] Rauch, pp. 216-7.

[34] Ludwik Hass, *Wolnomularstwo w Europie Srodkowo-Wschodniej w XVIII i XIX wieku* (Wroclaw, Ossolineum, 1982), p. 181.

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] Rauch, pp. 217-8.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 219.

[38] *Ibid.*.

case of someone who combined the humanitarian ideals of the Enlightenment with a religious outlook that was both Christian and influenced by theosophical currents.[39] Like Schwarz, he was not only a member of the Lyon System but also a leading member of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, as will be indicated.

There is some disagreement among writers on the subject as to the extent to which Novikov shared the Rosicrucian world view. Antoine Faivre, who has written about him in his *Eckartshausen et la theosophie chrétienne*, sees him as emphatically part of the Rosicrucian current.[40] A slightly different view is taken by Andrzej Walicki in *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism*. Walicki maintains that Novikov found in the masonic movement a compromise between patriotic traditionalism and the cosmopolitan ideas of the Enlightenment, between religious faith and rationalism.[41] He states, moreover, that Novikov was only to a minor degree influenced by mysticism and did not share the typical Rosicrucian emphasis on original sin. In support of this, he cites Novikov's article "On the Dignity of Man in His Relations to God and the World", published in his own journal *Morning Light*. Here Novikov propounded a view of man as "lord of the universe". All creatures, he argued, were made by God out of dust, but only man was made in the likeness of God and given the faculty of reason. Man was therefore a connecting link between matter and spirit. From this view, Novikov derived philosophical, social and political conclusions that were very much in keeping with Enlightenment thought. The conquest of the world by the God-given faculty of human reason was the most appropriate tribute that could be paid to the Creator. Furthermore, since human nature contained a divine element, all human beings deserved respect, regardless of origins or social status. By the same token every individual should work for the common good.[42] Despite Walicki's claim that Novikov essentially represented the rationalistic trend in Freemasonry, judging by this summary there was much in his thought that was influenced by the Rosicrucian-alchemical world view, such as his conception of man as a dual creature, made of dust but with a divine element. What Novikov appears to demonstrate was that it was possible to create a more optimistic version of the Rosicrucian doctrine and to derive a progressive, humanitarian philosophy from it.

After Schwarz's death the directorate of the Theoreticus grade in Moscow consisted of the following: Novikov; Baron Heinrich Schröder (who took over

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[39] Faivre, *Eckartshausen et la théosophie chrétienne*, p. 620.
[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 619-24.
[41] *Op. cit.* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 18 and 23.
[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 23-4.

as leader); A.M. Kutuzov; Prince N.N. Trubetskoi; Prince I.N. Trubetskoi; I.V. Lopuchin; I.P. Turgenev; and S.I. Gemaleja.[43] In September 1784 Novikov joined forces with his fellow publisher and Rosicrucian I.V. Lopuchin, to form a publishing syndicate called the Typographic Society of Moscow. Kutuzov and Turgenev also took an active part. The Typographic Society can therefore justifiably be called a Rosicrucian enterprise, and this is in keeping with the books that it published, which consisted largely of mystical and theosophical writings from abroad. Among these were works by Boehme, Silesius, John Pordage and Madame Guyon, Saint-Martin's *Des Erreurs et de la Vérité*, books on Paracelsian alchemy and explicitly Rosicrucian works such as *Die Pflichten der G. und R.C. alten Sistems* (originally published in 1782), attributed to J.F. Göhrung. The two publishing houses that made up the syndicate displayed different tendencies in their lists. While Lopuchin preferred mystical and quietistic writings, Novikov's house favoured those dealing with alchemy and hermeticism.[44] Thus, through the work of this Rosicrucian publishing enterprise, the Russian reading public was introduced to a whole range of mystical and esoteric writings. The output of Novikov and Lopuchin (including the period 1779-84 before the Typographical Society was founded) was enormous, constituting 893 titles, which was about 30 per cent of all books printed in Russia between 1779 and 1792.[45]

They sent their publications free of charge to seminaries for priests and sold them through a network of bookshops which they owned. Besides publishing, the Moscow Rosicrucians also organized charitable activities. Schröder, for example, bought a house in Moscow where he founded a hospital and apothecary's shop for the poor. During the famine of 1787 he and his fellow Rosicrucians were active in organizing help for the starving.[46]

The heyday of the Rosicrucian lodges in Russia came to an end because of official repression. Disliking Freemasonry, especially the Rosicrucian variety, the commander-in-chief of the troops in Moscow, Count Yakov Bruce, took advantage of a visit by Catherine II to the city to turn her attention to the way in which the Rosicrucian order was subordinate to Berlin. The situation became still worse when, after the death of J.G. Schwarz, his office was taken over in 1785 by Baron Heinrich Schröder, who came from Berlin. The Empress, as in the case of the Swedish rite, was afraid of foreign political in-

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[43] *Ibid.*, p. 621, note 330. Faivre cites as his sources, *inter alia*, the following: (1) M.Longinow, *Novikof i moskovski martinisti* (Moscow, 1867); (2) G. Vernadskij, *N.T. Novikof* (St. Petersburg, 1918); (3) B. Bogalivof, *Novikof i iévo vriémié* (Moscow, 1916).

[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 621-2.

[45] Hass, *Wolnomularstwo*, pp. 188-9. Walicki, in *A History of Russian Thought*, p. 25, gives slightly different statistics, stating that the Typographical Company issued 749 books (28 per cent) out of 2,585 published in Russia in the years 1781-90.

[46] *Ibid.*

fluence and at that time was especially critical of Freemasonry—she had just finished writing the comedy *Obmanshchick*, which mocked it. She ordered Bruce and the Metropolitan of Moscow, Platon, to carry out inspections of private schools in Moscow, a move which was intended as a blow against the Rosicrucians, as they exerted an influence on these schools. She also ordered an investigation of Novikov's loyalty and his publishing activities. Platon, to whom the Rosicrucians showed their rituals and regulations in order to convince him of their harmlessness, concluded on the basis of this evidence that Freemasonry was dangerous and informed Catherine accordingly. This led to the closure of all lodges of the system at the beginning of 1786. Only secret meetings of the Theoreticus grade (about 60 people) were continued in groups of nine people in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Volgoda, Orel and Krzemienchuk.[47] In 1792 Novikov was condemned, without trial, to 15 years' imprisonment, but was fortunately released in 1796 when Catherine died and her son Paul I, who was friendly to Novikov, came to the throne (he reigned 1796-1801).[48]

At about the same time that the Russian Rosicrucians were being harassed by the authorities, a crisis occurred in their relations with Berlin. Apparently the Russian brethren became disenchanted by the failure of Berlin to provide important secret teachings that had been promised, especially as they had sent contributions to Berlin amounting to 30,000 Reichstaler. Now their patience was at an end, and on 28 May 1786 a communication was sent to Berlin, signed by Schröder and other members of the Russian leadership, charging Wöllner with cheating, to which Wöllner replied by suspending Schröder. Soon afterwards came the "Silanum", the official cessation of the order's activities. Even after this, however, the Russian Rosicrucians continued a loose form of association,[49] and, perhaps more importantly, the *Weltanschauung* that they helped to foster exerted an influence on Paul I and his successor Alexander I.

Paul, unlike his mother, was well disposed towards societies of a mystical nature. Although he banned Freemasonry in 1797, preferring the Grand Order of Malta, of which he became Grand Master, he retained an enthusiasm, for the theocratic ideas that had been carried to Russia by the Martinists and Rosicrucians. His conception of the monarch was as a "Holy Tsar", a mediator between heaven and earth, a conception that was also promoted by Novikov, who believed that a true prince should be a kind of mystical initiate, drawing on spiritual and supernatural virtues and sancitified by the "Inner Church". This vision was set forth in Novikov's fictional work, *Chrysomander* (1783),

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[47] *Ibid.*, p. 182.
[48] Lennhoff and Posner, p. 1136.
[49] Hass, *Wolnomularstwo*, p. 183.

dealing with a magus-king named Hyperion, who uses alchemy to relieve the hardship of his subjects.[50]

When Paul was assassinated in 1801 he was succeeded by his son Alexander I. Brought up on a diet of the *philosophes* and greatly influenced by the Swiss republican thinker La Harpe, who acted for a time as his tutor, Alexander was at first hostile to the mystical currents that had so influenced his father. Following Napoleon's withdrawal in 1812, however, which he saw as the intervention of divine providence, Alexander developed mystical inclinations and turned with enthusiasm to the writings of Boehme, Swedenborg, Saint-Martin and Karl von Eckartshausen. The works of Eckartshausen had been appearing in Russian since 1793, including his most famous work *Die Wolke über dem Heiligtum* (1802), which was published in Russian in 1804. This work is one of the most eloquent expositions of the notion of the Inner Church, an invisible body which perpetuates the true, esoteric Christian message, as distinct from the exoteric one taught by the visible Church. Alexander was presented with a copy of this book in 1812, the year in which he met the famous mystic Baroness Juliana (Julie) von Krüdener, who helped him to understand Eckartshausen's work. He met Baroness von Krüdener at Heilbronn in June 1815 and again in Paris the following month, and it was she who is believed to have inspired Alexander's call for the formation of the Holy Alliance. Formed in Paris in September 1815, this association of European monarchs appears to have been intended by Alexander as another attempt to realize the dream of a Christian theocratic order throughout Europe. Apart from the direct influence of Krüdener, it is thought that Alexander's vision of the Holy Alliance was also inspired by his reading of Eckartshausen and by his contacts with Heinrich Jung-Stilling and with the Bavarian Christian mystic Franz von Baader (1765-1841).[51]

Alexander's flirtation with the German mystics did not last long. Under the influence of Metternich and of the Orthodox hierarchy in Russia, he retreated more and more into a position of traditional authoritarianism and conformity to the Orthodox Church, which worked hard to combat the mystical influence. In 1824, for example, the Archimandrite Photius wrote a letter to the Tsar decrying the influence of societies proclaiming a "new religion" of illuminism. This religion, he said, was the religion of Anti-Christ and the fomenter of revolution. Its false prophets included Jung-Stilling, Eckartshausen, Madame Guyon, and Jacob Boehme.[52] Here, once again, we find ideological categories upset. We see the arch-conservative Eckartshausen branded as a rev-

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[50] Faivre, *Eckartshausen et la théosophie chrétienne*, pp. 623-4.
[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 629-32.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 633.

olutionary and heretic, and the Tsar adopting a traditionalist position that rejected the works of the theosophists along with those of Voltaire and Diderot.[53]

We may appear to have strayed from the subject of Rosicrucianism, but it will have become apparent how difficult it is, especially in the context of Russia, to disentangle what is specifically "Rosicrucian" from the whole complex of mystical, esoteric and theosophical ideas of the age. Arguably, without the influence of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, and especially without the publishing activities of Novikov and his Rosicrucian circle, the ideas that influenced Alexander I in his plan for the Holy Alliance might never have taken root in Russia. It was the dream of a holy monarch, a combination of Charlemagne and Prospero, that had inspired Wöllner and the Berlin Rosicrucians when they had attempted, with such dire results, to place the mantle on the shoulders of Frederick William II. In Alexander I and his Holy Alliance the dream once again flickered to life for a brief period.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 634.

CHAPTER TEN

THE ASIATIC BRETHREN

In the early 1780s there emerged an organization, known initially as Die Ritter des Lichts (Knights of the Light) and later as Die Brüder St. Johannes des Evangelisten aus Asien in Europa (the Asiatic Brethren of St. John the Evangelist in Europe). Although it did not use the word "Rosicrucian" in its name, it can be considered part of the neo-Rosicrucian current for three reasons. First, the founder, Hans Heinrich von Ecker und Eckhoffen, was an ex-member of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. Secondly, the order drew on the same well of symbolism and esoteric tradition as the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. Thirdly, the initiates to the highest of the five grades of the order, the grade of Melchisedeck, were known as "Royal Priests" or "True Rosicrucians".[1]

The order of the Asiatic Brethren stands out among German masonic and para-masonic organizations of its day, chiefly on account of the way in which it welcomed Jewish members (at least for a time) and was steeped in Jewish esoteric lore. Because of this it has attracted the attention of writers on Jewish history, notably Jakob Katz, who includes a detailed chapter on the order's history in his *Jews and Freemasons in Europe 1723-1939*.[2] For the same reason it presents particular difficulties for the historian who is inclined to categorize the whole Rosicrucian phenomenon as anti-*Aufklärung*. Before attempting to assess the Asiatic Brethren in the context of the *Aufklärung* and in relation to the issue of Jewish emancipation, it is necessary to know the outlines of the order's history.

Whether or not Hans Heinrich von Ecker und Eckhoffen was identical with Magister Pianco, author of *Der Rosenkreuzer in seiner Blösse*, it is generally agreed that he had been a member of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, with the order name of Nichneri Vekorth. Under this name he published in 1782 a defence against Phoebron's attack on him in *Der im Lichte der Wahrheit strahlende Rosenkreuzer*, denying his authorship of the Pianco book.[3] Ecker, with the help of certain collaborators, founded the order of the Ritter des Lichts in

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[1] *Der Signatstern, oder die enthüllten sämmtlichen sieben Grade der mystischen Freimaurerei nebst dem Orden der Ritter des Lichts*. 16 vols. (Berlin, 1803-21), Vol. 5, p. 355. Dr. R.J.W. Evans was kind enough to lend me his copy of this rare work.

[2] Jacob Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe 1723-1939* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1970).

[3] Arnold Marx, *Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, p. 160, and Wolfstieg, *Bibliographie der Freimaurerei*, p. 959.

Vienna in about 1780 or 81.[4] The main document on its origins is a history of the order written by one of its members,the kabbalistic scholar Franz Josef Molitor,[5] who describes the creation of the order as follows:

> Probably he [Ecker] had already conceived the idea of founding a new order when in Vienna he made the acquaintance of K. Justus. This Franciscan monk, whose civilian name is said to have been Bischof, was the apothecary of his monastery and either belonged himself to the order of the Rosicrucians or at least was engaged in alchemical work. He possessed also other knowledge, which he had brought with him from the East, since he had spent a long time at a monastery in Jerusalem. Here or elsewhere in the Orient he had become acquainted with kabbalistic Jews and especially with a certain Asaria, originally a merchant, who had handed his business over to his sons to devote himself entirely to study. Asaria belonged to a kabbalistic Jewish sect which is spread throughout the three parts of the old world and, after giving up his trade, travelled around in various countries on behalf of his order. Through Justus Eckhof[f]en was initiated into mystical Jewish knowledge, without, however, making particular progress in its theoretical aspects. On the other hand he had brought correspondingly more practical knowledge of alchemy and magic with him from the Rosicrucians. It is uncertain whether he immediately formed an association for such secret work in Vienna or whether Justus had already founded one. Ecker, however, brought it fully to life, initially under the name of the Brothers of Light. Its ritual was kabbalistic; thus, for example, the two pillars bore the sephirotic names of Ne[t]zach and Hod. When this form was found no longer suitable the order was given a different one and emerged under the name of the Asiatic Brethren of Saint John in Europe.[6]

A picture of the order in its first incarnation as the Ritter des Lichts can be found in the *Signatstern*, a collection of miscellaneous masonic material from Wöllner's *Nachlaβ*, which was published in 1803-15.[7] From the details given here it is clear that, although at this stage Ecker had not yet developed the full Jewish-Christian syncretism that characterized the later version of the order, he had already begun to introduce certain Jewish touches. The fourth of the five grades, for example, was that of "Levite".[8] The same source gives details of the elaborate organizational structure that Ecker envisaged. Each grade was to have its own chapter, and the chapters themselves were arranged into provinces with seven chapters each.[9] The premises where the elections to the office of Provincial Administrator were to take place are described as follows:

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4 Katz, p. 26.

5 Kloβ collection, 191 D. 29, p. 1.

6 There are two manuscript versions of this history in the Kloβ collection: a shorter one, written in 1820, and a longer one, written in 1829. The shorter one has been published as an appendix to Jacob Katz's article "The First Controversy over accepting Jews as Freemasons", in *Zion*, Vol. 25, 1965, pp. 204ff. The longer version (Kloβ 191 D. 29) is the one I refer to here.

7 See note 1.

8 *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, 2nd edition (Berlin, 1811), p. 4.

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

> The building where the knights and brethren assemble for the election should be spacious, well located and appropriate for this purpose, that is to say it should have at least four rooms, the first being an ante-room.
>
> ... The entry to the Chapter Room should be through a large doorway. The walls of the room should be bright red with green borders. On each wall should be seven candelabra, each with three arms, and in the centre of the room should hang a seven-branched candelabrum, all the candelabra being of gold.

The passage goes on to describe an elaborate throne for the Provincial Administrator in front of a sanctum flanked by golden pillars in which is displayed the word "Jehovah" in a triangle surrounded by flames.[10]

A similar type of room must have been used for the regular ceremonies of the fifth grade, that of the Priests or True Rosicrucians, judging by the diagram and description given of the layout. Once again, there is a throne in front of a sanctum, and the other features of the room include a vessel with myrrh and salt dissolved in water, a golden ox covered with a black cloth, an arrangement of 17 golden pillars and a vessel for the "sacred fire" of seven different fuels, on which was to be burned an incense made of ten spices.[11]

The rituals of the various grades have a loosely masonic framework, and the regulations stipulate that no one who has not been initiated in a regular masonic lodge can be admitted to the order.[12] The symbolism of the rituals owes much to the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, as can be seen in the initiation ritual for the first grade where regular masonic symbols are interpreted in an alchemical sense, just as they are in the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. The familiar masonic emblem of the star, for example, is represented as standing for the word *Aesch-Majim* "the watery fire or fiery water, which we know how to obtain from our substance".[13]

Ecker hoped to present his new order to the masonic world at the Wilhelmsbad convention of 1782. To this end he travelled to Schleswig early in 1782 to visit the Landgraf Carl von Hessen-Kassel, a prominent freemason and an avid explorer of mystical and esoteric rites who will be encountered again. Whatever took place between Ecker and the Landgraf, he did not succeed in his aim, since a protest against his appearance at Wilhelmsbad was registered by a group of leading members of the Berlin lodge Friedrich zum goldenen Löwen, headed by Wöllner. Curiously, it is reported that Wöllner later became a member of Ecker's order, along with Bischoffswerder and Crown Prince Frederick

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[10] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 109-10.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 50.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

William,[14] but at the time he and his co-protestors clearly felt acute resentment against Ecker. The letter that this group wrote to Duke Ferdinand von Braunschweig, Grand Master of the Strict Observance, speaks of the "danger that fearfully threatens the Convention and so many lodges in Germany" and continues:

> We know that Satan's emissaries are coming there to work their mischief. We know that a totally new bogus order, the Knights of the True Light, has been created and is divided into the following five grades: Novices of three, five and seven years, Levites and Priests. All are said to be conferred free of charge and performed with acts of the blackest diabolic magic.[15]

Having failed in his attempt to appear at Wilhelmsbad, Ecker returned to Austria and resided for some two years at Innsbruck in the Tyrol where he gained support for his order from Franz von Gumer (1734-1794), a prominent Tyrolean citizen, freemason, former mayor of Bozen and one of the leading opponents of the Josephine reforms in the Tyrol.[16] Gumer had converted part of his house at Bozen into a masonic temple for meetings of the Bozen lodge. This room is still preserved, and the ceiling painting has a Rosicrucian touch in the form of a painting featuring the alchemical symbols of salt, sulphur and mercury.[17] Probably Gumer was a member of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz before (or even after) joining forces with Ecker, but in any event he was clearly cast in the Rosicrucian mould, as is shown by his papers, which are preserved at Innsbruck.[18] These contain, among other things, magical talismans, kabbalistic alphabets, numerological keys and detailed records of alchemical processes.

Also among the papers is a letter to Gumer from Ecker, written in 1783. This letter, which deals with practical matters relating to the order, is evidence that the grades of Ecker's system were actually being worked at this time, since Ecker was evidently in the course of preparing working texts of the rituals. The letter also implies that Gumer was supporting him financially. Ecker writes:

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[14] Katz mentions this report (*Jews and Freemasons in Europe*, p. 37), quoting Kneiser, "Landgraf Carl zu Hessen", in Latomia, Vol. 22, 1863, p. 58. If Wöllner had been a member it would explain why such an abundance of documents of the order were found in his *Nachlaß*.

[15] Kloß, 191 D. 29, p. 80.

[16] See Helmut Reinalter, *Geheimbünde in Tirol* (Bozen, Verlagsanstanlt Athesia, 1982), pp. 96-110, 135-45; and Miriam J.Levy, *Governance and Grievance: Habsburg Policy and Italian Tyrol in the Eighteenth Century* (West Lafayette, Indiana, Purdue University Press, 1988), which contains many references to Gumer.

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 103-5.

[18] The Gumer *Nachlaß* is in the Tiroler Landesarchiv, Innsbruck under Sammelakten Gruppe D, XXI, Lage 1.

> I would, Your Excellency, have handed over the first grade, together with the appropriate work to be undertaken ... except that I do not know which brethren are still affiliated to the Province, and, since no one answers my enquiries, there is nothing I can do. Would Your Excellency ... have the kindness to request Brother [illegible] to furnish me with the [illegible] of the brethren at Innsbruck. ... The second grade, which is now ready, contains about 70 sheets ... together with 30 painted hieroglyphs. For each of these I had to pay the painter Fl [1 florin].

There follows a list of expenses, adding up to 43 Florins and 48 Kreuzer, and Ecker adds: "This, therefore is the sum to be paid for the second grade."[19]

While in the Tyrol, Ecker made the acquaintance of a Jew named Joseph Hirschfeld, who was to play a key role in the re-shaping of the order. Molitor writes:

> Hirschfeld, a native of Karlsruhe, had first attended the Gymnasium of his native town and then studied medicine at Straβburg. Since, however, he was lacking in support he left the university and went to the Tyrol, where he was employed in salt-mining. As Eckhof[f]en found in him an able man, he took him as his secretary, especially on account of the Hebrew language, which he [Ecker] did not know but needed because of the fact that the order was founded on Hebrew documents.[20]

Molitor leaves out the fact that between leaving Straβburg and going to the Tirol Hirschfeld had a sojourn in Berlin where he was befriended by Moses Mendelssohn and his circle but did not accept their rationalist doctrines. As Ecker's secretary he was employed to copy out the documents of the Ecker's order. This led to an interest in their content, and soon Hirschfeld became a member of the order.[21]

In 1784 Ecker took up residence in Vienna, and the following year he and Hirschfeld reorganized the order as the Asiatic Brethren.[22] Another important collaborator was one Baron Thomas von Schönfeld, an apostate Jew and prolific writer who was to end his life on the guillotine during the Reign of Terror in Paris. He had been a follower of the Sabbatian movement, the cult of the 17th-century pseudo-Messiah Sabbatai Zvi, and incorporated certain Sabbatian doctrines into the order's teachings.[23] Other members of the order at this time included, according to Molitor, many distinguished individuals such as the Prince of Lichtenstein, the Austrian Minister of Justice (no name given),

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[19] Gumer *Nachlaβ*, letter from Hans Heinrich von Ecker und Eckhoffen to Gumer, folios 92 *verso* and 93 *recto*.

[20] Molitor, p. 2.

[21] Katz, pp. 30-32.

[22] Gerschom Scholem, "Ein verschollener jüdischer Mystiker der Aufklärungszeit, E.J. Hirschfeld", in *Yearbook VII of the Leo Baeck Institute* (1962), p. 262.

[23] Katz, p. 28.

the Count von Westenburg and the Count von Thun.[24] Other Christian members listed in a different source included three army officers, two court officials and a doctor of medicine.[25] As for Jewish members, at least three wealthy Viennese Jews belonged to the order: Arnstein, Eskeles and Hönig.[26] Arnstein's brother-in-law in Berlin, Isaac Daniel Itzig, also became a member.[27]

The order as it now emerged was unique among German masonic and paramasonic orders in its total openness to Jewish members. Its symbolism and ritual pratice were an extraordinary amalgam of Jewish elements, Christian mysticism, alchemy and mystical Freemasonry. From Judaism it took the basic terminology of its hierarchy. The supreme council of the order was known as the Synedrion (Sanhedrin),[28] and the officers carried Hebrew titles. Prince Carl von Hessen, for example, who became titular head of the order, had the title of Chacham Hackolel, while Ecker's title was Rosch Hamdabrim. As Gershom Scholem points out in his article on Hirschfeld, this terminology was different from the purely biblical Hebrew terminology that pervaded ordinary Freemasonry, and must have stemmed from Hirschfeld's knowledge of rabbinical Hebrew.[29] The intention behind these practices, as Molitor explains, was to bring about religious unity by leading Christianity back to its Jewish form. Molitor states that this unifying spirit also lay behind the practice of giving Jewish names to Christian members, and vice versa. Thus Ecker became Abraham, and his younger brother Carl became Ismael. Hirschfeld, however, as an exception, was given the Hebrew name Elias.[30] Another practice was to celebrate Christian holidays, such as Christmas and the Day of Saint John the Apostle, as well as Jewish festivals, such as the anniveraries of the birth and death of Moses, of the Exodus and of the Giving of the Law.[31]

As Katz points out, this mingling of Christian and Jewish observance must have been easier for the Christian members to accept than for their Jewish brethren.[32] The former could regard themselves as merely re-establishing contact with the Jewish roots of Christianity, whereas the latter must have been strongly aware that they were breaking their own religious code, especially when, as at certain gatherings of the order, they were required to eat pork with milk.[33] Katz attributes such antinomian practices partly to the Sabbatian strain in the order, but he also detects an *Aufklärung* influence in the willingness of

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[24] Molitor, p. 2.
[25] Katz, p. 247, note 29.
[26] Katz, p. 32.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 37
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] Scholem, p. 262.
[30] Molitor, p. 2.
[31] Scholem, pp. 265ff.
[32] Katz, p. 36.
[33] Scholem, p. 266.

Jewish members to cast aside the norms of their faith. He mentions "the disintegrating tendencies of the Haskalah [the Jewish Enlightenment] which, explicitly or tacitly, provided the justification for abandoning Jewish traditions" and points to the examples of Itzig and Arenstein—both members of the order—whose families "furnish a clear example of this process of alienation, which impelled many to forsake Judaism altogether and left others behind, with their bearings lost and the security of their environment destroyed." Katz continues:

> The lost souls of the latter group were easy targets for recruitment in orders of the Asiatic Brethren variety, since such an association offered them a new social haven, beyond the borders of Judaism, but where they were not called upon to sever their former connections and to adopt Christianity.[34]

If one were to judge an organization in terms of its inter-faith toleration, the Asiatic Brethren would, from the picture that has emerged so far, qualify as a shining example of *Aufklärung* attitudes. It also had a link with the Jewish *Aufklärung*, the Haskalah, by virtue of the fact that, as Katz indicates, so many of its members were imbued with the spirit of that movement. When one examines the philosophy and epistemology of the order, however, one finds that it evinces a world view opposed to that of the *Aufklärung* in a way very similar to the Gold- und Rosenkreuz world view.

One of the main sources of information on the doctrines of the Asiatic Brethren is a collection of documents of the order published under the title *Die Brüder St. Johannes des Evangelisten aus Asien in Europa*.[35] The world view evinced in this work is conveniently summarized by Scholem, who believes that the order's teachings were probably compiled jointly by Ecker and Hirschfeld but mostly by the latter.[36]

Like the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, the order was anxious to emphasize its antiquity. It claimed to have been founded by Saint John the Evangelist in the year AD40, and used a dating system in which 40 was subtracted from any calendar year. As in the earlier form of the order, there were five grades: two *Probestufen* and three higher grades. The teaching reveals the influence of two main sources, neither of which are acknowledged. One of these was Saint-Martin's work, *Des Erreurs et de la vérité* (1775), from which the order took certain numerological notions—for example that the esoteric realm in which we struggle for spiritual knowledge contains seven trees, each with 16 roots and 490 branches. The other main source, which also profoundly influenced

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[34] Katz, pp. 36-7.

[35] *Die Brüder St. Johannes des Evangelisten aus Asien in Europa, oder die einzig wahre und echte Freymaurerey* ... "von einem hohen Obern" (Berlin, 1803).

[36] Scholem, pp. 266-9.

the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, was Georg von Welling's *Opus Mago-Cabbalisticum et Theosophicum*. From Welling's work came most of the alchemical notions and terminology used by the order, such as the idea of the *Aesch-Majim*, or fiery water, thought to be the primal substance of creation, which, as already mentioned, was represented by the six-pointed star, *Signatstern*. From Welling also came the gnostic-dualistic outlook, which again we found in the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, in which the Fall of Lucifer was seen as being responsible for the emergence of the material realm and its separation from the spiritual. As Scholem points out, these ideas, although fully in the Christian theosophical spirit of Boehme and Paracelsus, could quite easily be combined with legitimate kabbalistic doctrines, which Hirschsfeld also incorporated into the order's teachings.[37] Scholem also states that the order's documents contain an unmistakeably Sabbatian element, namely the doctrine relating to "the separation of the thinking and unthinking lights in God, that is to say the separation of the lights in which the thought of creation was present, from those in which this intention was not and is not present."[38]

With Vienna as their base, the Asiatic Brethren flourished and spread, but their success soon aroused the animosity of certain prominent freemasons of the established rites and of two individuals in particular. One was Prince Johann Baptist Karl von Dietrichstein, Grand Master of the Austrian lodges and reported to have been a member of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. The other was the prominent mason and *Aufklärung* figure Ignaz von Born. In order to regulate Austrian Freemasonry, and partly to suppress the Asiatics and other idiosyncratic tendencies, Dietrichstein (perhaps by now a disenchanted Rosicrucian), with the encouragement of Ignaz von Born, proposed to Joseph II that he pass a law imposing stricter controls on masonic activity.[39] When Ecker heard of this plan he and three other representatives of the order held a meeting with Dietrichstein and Baron von Kressel, another leading freemason, to try to persuade them not to take action against the Asiatic Brethren. Following the meeting Ecker, writing under his order name of Abraham, issued a circular, preserved in the Gumer *Nachlaβ* and dated 14 January 1745 (i.e. 1785), in which he declared:

> As various false rumours concerning ... unbrotherly proceedings have been concocted and spread abroad, the wise and venerable lesser Sanhedrin of the Order of the Asiatic Knights and Brethren of Saint John the Evangelist in Europe has com-

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[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 267-8.

[38] Scholem, p. 269.

[39] Lennhoff and Posner, *Internationales Freimaurer-Lexikon* (Vienna, 1930; reprint, Vienna/Munich, Amalthea, 1932), p. 370; and Ludwig Abafi, *Geschichte der Freimaurerei in Oesterreich-Ungarn* (Budapest, 1890-99), Vol. IV, pp. 143-80. Abafi includes the text of Joseph II's *Handbillet* for the edict.

> missioned me, the undersigned Brother, to make known to the Brethren of our order, by means of a circular, the discussions which Brothers von Ziegler, von Pichel, von Wiesenthal and the undersigned held with his Princely Grace von Dietrichstein as national Grand Master ... and His Excellency Baron von Kressel as Provincial Grand Master. ...
>
> First, the Brethren explained that the order ... is not a new order but the one that has been known for more than a thousand years in Europe under the name of the Brethren of Saint John, transmitted from individul to individual. Thus, for example, Brother von Ziegler, among others, has been in the order, in its old form, for 21 years. By the old order we mean the one which was not constituted as a systematic body but, as I have said, was passed on by word of mouth to those who were worthy. Thus any Brother who knows the original source of the hieroglyphs knows also the source of their meaning.
>
> Secondly, we read out our rules, and after the worshipful Brethren Prince von Dietrichstein and Baron von Kressel had seen that there was nothing in them that was contrary to religion and good morals or to the duties of a faithful subject, they declared that they had not the slightest objection to them and indeed wished that they could be generally applied.[40]

On the subject of the proposed law, Ecker wrote:

> Would not such a law be totally contrary to the fundamental principles of Freemasonry? Can I demand of a man that, from his childhood to his 30th year, he remain in school, a school in which they talk of knowledge and wisdom but where the teachers hardly know the names of these things. That would truly be despotic tyranny like the schemes of the Jesuits who strictly forbid their pupils to go near any stream that leads to true *Aufklärung*.[41]

Here Ecker is referring to the notion of ordinary masonry as a *Pflanzschule* for the higher degrees where the true wisdom is to be found. It is striking that he invokes the word *Aufklärung* and the *bête noire* of the Jesuits.

Unfortunately Ecker's representations to Dietrichstein were of no avail, for in December of 1785 Joseph II issued his *Freimaurerpatent*, which brought Freemasonry under the Emperor's protection but greatly reduced the number of lodges that were permitted to operate and struck a blow against the Asiatics and other higher degree systems[42] as well as the Illuminati. In the event the *Freimaurerpatent* went a good deal further in its restrictions on Freemasonry than Dietrichtstein and Born had intended. After the passing of the edict, Ecker remained for a time in Vienna (perhaps until 1786 or 87),[43] but then moved to north Germany.

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[40] Tiroler Landesarchiv, Gumer *Nachlaβ* (see note 18), *Circulare*, issued by Abraham (Ecker und Eckhoffen), fol.90, *recto* and *verso*.

[41] *Ibid.*, 91 *verso*.

[42] Arnold Marx, *Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, p. 134, and Lennhoff and Posner, *Internationales Freimaurer-Lexikon*, entry for Joseph II, pp. 788-9.

[43] Katz, p. 37.

Meanwhile the order had spread far and wide, and there are records of lodges in Prague, Innsbruck, Berlin, Frankfurt, Wetzlar, Marburg and Hamburg.[44] The Hamburg lodge was run by Hans Heinrich von Ecker's younger brother Hans Carl. It had 24 members including bankers, merchants, physicians and a clergyman, but no prominent aristocrats or people of great distinction. Six of the members were Jews: two merchants, one a court agent and one a physician.[45]

The elder Ecker came to Hamburg to attend the inauguration of his brother's lodge in December, 1785, but he had another reason for making the journey north from Vienna. This was just the time when the *Freimaurerediki* was being promulgated (it came into effect early in 1786), and Ecker was now hoping that his order would find new protection in the north. He found it in two prominent freemasons, Prince Ferdinand of Braunschweig and the Landgraf Carl von Hessen-Kassel.[46] The former, who has been encountered before as the former head of the Strict Observance, a high-ranking member of the Illuminati and an ardent alchemist, became *Generalobermeister* of the Asiatics in 1786.[47] Carl von Hessen, however, played a more important role. Carl was the son-in-law of the Danish King Frederick VI, held lands in Schleswig, Holstein and Norway and played a leading role in Freemasonry in both Denmark and northern Germany.[48]

He had been in touch with Ecker since 1782, and now he accepted the title of supreme head of the order.[49] Like Ferdinand of Braunschweig, Carl von Hessen was one of those aristocrats who had a finger in every masonic pie, including the Illuminati, which he joined in 1782, becoming *Nationaloberer* for Denmark, Sweden and Russia.[50] Also like Ferdinand, he evidently saw no conflict between his position in the secular, rationalist Illuminati and his fervent devotion to the mystical side of Freemasonry. He was constantly preoccupied with a search for the "hidden superiors" and the "true secret", and this search led him into numerous high-degree systems including the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, the French order of the Philalèthes and the Asiatics.[51] He was an indefatigable devotee of alchemy and possessed his own laboratory. In this he was guided by the mysterious French alchemist, the Comte de Saint-Germain,

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[44] *Ibid.*

[45] Katz, p. 38.

[46] Katz, p. 40.

[47] Hans Riegelmann, *Die europäischen Dynastien in ihrem Verhältnis zur Freimaurerei* (Berlin, Nordland Verlag, 1943), p. 225.

[48] Lennhoff and Posner, *Internationales Freimaurer-Lexikon*, pp. 816-7.

[49] Katz, p. 40.

[50] Riegelmann, p. 254.

[51] Lennhoff and Posner, pp. 816-7.

whom he harboured on his estates during the last years of Saint-Germain's life.[52]

Under the protection of Carl von Hessen, Ecker and Hirschfeld now moved to Schleswig, which became the headquarters of the Asiatic Brethren.[53] However, if Ecker thought he had found a safe haven he was wrong, for the order now found itself under attack from masons who disapproved of its policies. The first attack came from certain masons in Hamburg who were incensed by the activities of Carl von Ecker's lodge and issued an anonymously written eight-page pamphlet entitled *Unpartheiische und gründliche Nachricht von der Freymäurerloge der Juden und anderen geheimen Gesellschaften in Hamburg* (1786), which deplored the admission of Jews on the grounds that Jesus Christ had always been the cornerstone of Masonry.[54] An anonymous rebuttal published the same year and probably written by Carl von Ecker, defended the practice of admitting Jews and pointed to the example of English Masonry which had never discriminated against Jews.[55]

The following year, 1787, came another work attacking the Asiatics. This was entitled *Authentische Nachricht von den Ritter- und Brüder- Eingeweihten aus Asien, zur Beherzigung für Freymaurern.* Although this was published anonymously, the author is known to have been a Dane of German origin named Friedrich Münter,[56] a distinguished theologian, scientist and eminent freemason, who later became bishop of Seeland. What makes the authorship interesting is that Münter is generally regarded as an *Aufklärung* figure. He was, for example, a member of the Illuminati and was in correspondence with Weishaupt and Bode as well as with Born and the Vienna Illuminati. He was a strong advocate of enlightened religion and in masonic matters normally strove to avoid intolerance towards any system.[57]

The *Authentische Nachricht*, as the foreword explains, was based on documents of the Asiatic Brethren which had come into Münter's hands. In the foreword Münter laments the theosophical, magical and Rosicrucian strains in Freemasonry which had become stronger in recent years, threatening to turn people away from philosophy and enlightenment. He affirms the link between these strains and the suppressed Jesuit order, and goes on to attack the Rosicrucians for the way in which they nonsensically mix alchemy and theology and

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52 Riegelmann, p. 255.

53 Katz, p. 40.

54 Katz, pp. 38-9 and note 60.

55 *Ein Wort zum Nachdenken über die sogenannte Unpartheiische und gründliche Nachrichten von der Freimaurer-Loge der Juden und andere geheimen Gesellschaften in Hamburg* (Altona, 1786). See Katz, p. 39 and note 63.

56 Katz, p. 41.

57 See the study by Edith Rosenstrauch-Königsberg, *Freimaurer, Illuminat, Weltbürger: Friedrich Münters Reisen und Briefe in ihren europäischen Bezügen* (Berlin, Ulrich Camen, 1984).

for the hierarchical nature of their system and the blind obedience and belief that they demand of their followers.[58] He continues:

> If the Rosicrucians continue for another half century in the way that they have begun, then philosophy and enlightened science will be ousted; we shall have no more history or philosophical theology; monkish legends, priestly hocus-pocus and superstition will possess the thrones; the princes, already deceived by swindlers, will all become royal priests and will learn from the despotism of the order yet more fearful despotism. ...
>
> It has long been known that the Rosicrucians are divided into many sects that, to all appearances, hate each other, which to some extent they do ... but whose heads are all united and strive towards a common goal. ... This is partly to confuse the world and make them seem weaker than they are, partly to lure people into the various societies through the appeal of novelty ... and partly, through the apparent enmity between sects, to discover and nullify secret attacks against their whole structure.[59]

Münter becomes even more lurid when he writes of initiation ceremonies in a secret cave at the monastery of Monte Senario near Florence, formerly used by the Etruscans for sacrifices. These Florentine Rosicrucians, he says, are in correspondence with those in Munich.[60] The fact that a man of Münter's erudition could write in this vein is another indication of just how powerful a *bête noire* the Rosicrucians could be to the *Aufklärer*.

Turning to the Asiatic Brethren, Münter writes:

> A new branch of the Rosicrucians, which only emerged a few years ago, is the order of the Initiated Asiatic Knights and Brethren. That these belong to the same class as the Rosicrucians, even though they pretend to be enemies of the latter, becomes clear as soon as one knows their constitution. They claim to have their great Sanhedrin in the East, probably the Middle East, but are in close touch with the priests of the Egyptian wisdom in the Pyramids, from whom they often receive secret letters.[61]

Münter goes on to reproduce the rules for admission to the order:

> (1) Any brother, of whatever religion, class or system, can enter the order, provided that he is a right-thinking, honest and genuine citizen. ...
> (2) Such a brother must, however, have been made a Knight and Master in an ordinary and regular Melchisedeck or St. John's lodge of freemasons.
> (3) The name Melchisedeck lodges refers to those lodges in which Jews, Turks, Persians, Armenians, Copts etc. labour. ...[62]

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[58] Anon. (Friedrich Münter), *Authentische Nachricht von den Ritter und Brüder-Eingeweihten aus Asien* (no place of publication given, 1787), pp. viff.

[59] *Ibid.*, pp. xviii-xxi.

[60] *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

[61] *Ibid.*, pp. xxii-xxiii.

[62] *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

These Melchisedeck lodges were a device to enable the Asiatics to admit Jews while at the same time insisting that they be already initiated as masons. Since nearly all regular masonic lodges in Germany administering the Craft (or St. John's) degrees were exclusively Christian, it was necessary to claim the existence of an alternative Craft-degree system for Jews. In fact, the Melchisedeck lodges existed only in name,[63] and the conferring of the Melchisedeck degrees was probably a formality. Münter, in a footnote, deplores this practice: "It is, as every Entered Apprentice knows, the first rule of all regular working lodges of all systems, that only Christians can be accepted."[64] And he adds, quite incorrectly, that no lodges under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of London admit Jews.[65] In fact, as already mentioned, the English lodges were at pains not to be exclusively Christian.

Münter's attack drew counter-attacks from both of the Ecker brothers. Heinrich replied under his own name in a work entitled *Abfertigung an den ungenannten Verfasser der verbreiteten sogenannten: Authentischen Nachricht von den Ritter- und Brüder-Eingeweihten aus Asien*, published at Hamburg in 1788. In this work, Ecker denied that his order was an off-shoot of the Rosicrucians and contradicted Münter's assertion that Jews were never admitted into regular lodges.

Carl von Ecker's counter-attack was written under the pseudonym of "Carl Friedrich von Boscamp, called Lasopolski" and was entitled *Werden und können Israeliten zu Freymaurern aufgenommen werden?* (Hamburg, 1788). Carl von Ecker here laments the prejudices against Jews in Germany, using language that is strongly redolent of *Aufklärung* views, as for example when he writes of the Jews not being able to enjoy "the original rights of a free man, resting on the indisputable law of nature".[66] At the same time he holds the Jews partly responsible for their own condition. He deplores, for example, the fact that many of them preserve what he calls superstitious and absurd opinions instead of simply obeying the pure mosaic teachings of their religion.[67] Freemasonry, according to Carl von Ecker, provides perhaps the only route to enlightenment for the Jews, and therefore it must be open to them.[68]

Although the Eckers had thus defended the admission of Jews, the issue continued to be a cause of dissension within the order. Some of the Schleswig members, for example, felt that, although existing Jewish members should be allowed to remain, new ones should be restricted. There was trouble also in the

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[63] Katz, p. 40.
[64] Münter, *Authentische Nachricht*, p. 2, note 2.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 3, note 3.
[66] *Op. cit.*, p. 46.
[67] *Op. cit.*, pp. 46-7.
[68] *Op. cit.*, pp. 41 and 51ff.

Hamburg branch of the order. Carl von Ecker applied for masonic authorization from Duke Ferdinand of Braunschweig, who agreed only on condition that Jewish members be expelled from the group. Carl von Hessen proposed a compromise in which Jewish Asiatic Brethren would form a separate lodge called the Melchisedeck lodge, but the Hamburg Jewish members rejected this proposal and left the order.[69]

Hirschfeld, meanwhile, was having his own problems in the Schleswig branch, culminating in a legal battle which began when he sued Ecker for payment of a debt. Ecker retaliated by claiming that Hirschfeld had threatened his life, and the affair quickly escalated. Hirschfeld was placed under house arrest and expelled from the order in a circular that accused him of having gone too far in imposing Jewish kabbalistic elements on the rituals of the order. Although kabbalistic meditation was valuable, the circular argued, its object was to lead the Christian beyond the limits attainable by a Jew.[70]

In the midst of Hirschfeld's troubles Heinrich von Ecker died in August 1791, while the trial was still in progress. Hirschfeld was released and restored to favour with Carl von Hessen, but he was not allowed to resume his former position in the order. Resentment against him still simmered, and he was suspected of having written an anonymous polemic against the Asiatics entitled *Der Asiate in seiner Blösse oder gründlicher Beweis: daß die Ritter und Brüder Eingeweihten aus Asien ächte Rosenkreuzer sind*, which appeared in 1790. This repeated the claim that the Asiatics were merely the Rosicrucians in a new disguise and castigated them for their unjust treatment of Hirschfeld.[71]

In February 1792 a mysterious person, referred to as I. Ben Jos. appeared in Schleswig and was presented by Hirschfeld as a leading member of the order. Katz identifies him as none other than Thomas von Schoenfeld, the Viennese Jew who had played a seminal role in the foundation of the order. He paid 550 Taler to settle Hirschfeld's debts, and the two of them travelled to Strasbourg where they made the acquaintance of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, the "Philosophe Inconnu", whose work had exerted such a strong influence on high-degree masonry. From here Schoenfeld went on to Paris where he tragically died on the guillotine on 5 April 1793. With the Asiatic Brethren in a state of collapse, Hirschfeld went back to his native Karlsruhe and eventually settled at Offenbach, near Frankfurt.[72] In 1796 he and his brother Pascal published a book entitled *Biblisches Organon oder Realübersetzung der Bibel mit der*

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[69] Katz, pp. 46-7.
[70] *Ibid.*, pp. 47-8.
[71] *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.
[72] *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

mystischen Begleitung und kritischen Anmerkungen, which evinces the same mixture of Kabbalism and Christian theosophy as had pervaded the Asiatic Brethren.[73] As late as 1817 Hirschfeld was still dreaming of resurrecting the order.[74]

Although the order of the Asiatic Brethren was short-lived its echoes affected a Jewish masonic lodge founded in Frankfurt in the wake of the Napoleonic conquest. While it is not within the scope of this study to enter into a full discussion of this lodge, which has been dealt with in detail in Jacob Katz's *Jews and Freemasons in Europe*,[75] it is relevant to give a brief outline of its history based largely on Katz's account. Apart from the Asiatic Brethren, various attempts had been made by German Jews to enter Freemasonry, either by setting up lodges of their own or by entering existing lodges. Any lodges with Jewish members were, however, branded as irregular by the mainstream of German Masonry, which remained, as we have seen, resolutely Christian. This changed, however, with the Napoleonic conquest, during which French-affiliated lodges were established on German soil, in which the admission of Jews was given official approval in line with the policy of the Grand Orient in Paris. It was under these circumstances that a Jew named Sigismund Geisenheimer founded, under French aegis, the Loge de l'Aurore Naissante or, in German, Zur aufgehenden Morgenröthe, often called simply the Judenloge. The lodge, chartered in 1807 and ceremonially inaugurated the following year, was of mixed Jewish and Christian membership, and among the Christian members was Franz Joseph Molitor, the kabbalistic scholar who had been an important member of the Asiatic Brethren and had remained in close touch with Hirschfeld. At the inauguration he made a speech welcoming the event as symptomatic of the dawn of a new era in which all classes of men would look upon each other as brothers. "And so," he declared, mixing theosophical language with the vocabulary of *Aufklärung*, "the illumination of the Enlightenment penetrates to all classes of society, and estates that diverge in the State return united in the world of the spirit."[76]

All went well for the lodge until the German reconquest, when the Parisian affiliation became a liability and it was forced to seek authorization elsewhere. An attempt was made, through the mediation of Hirschfeld, to obtain authorization from Carl von Hessen. This was at first agreed, but later the arrangement broke down over Carl's ambivalent attitude towards the question of Jewish members, in other words over the same problem that had bedevilled the Asiatic Brethren. While Carl was willing to recognize the importance of the

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[73] Scholem, pp. 248-52.
[74] *Ibid.*, pp. 257-8.
[75] Katz, pp. 54-81.
[76] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

Jewish tradition of esoteric wisdom, he still clung to the belief that Christianity was the ocean into which all true initiatory traditions flowed. Thus, for example, he insisted that no Jew should hold the office of master in the lodge, and it was a dispute on this point that led to a severing of relations with Carl. Molitor was influenced by Carl into shifting his ground away from his original humanistic position, and he came to share the view that the upper levels of Masonry were accessible only to those who accepted the symbols of Christianity. In the end, as Katz writes, "he developed a philosophical system consisting of a synthesis of the Jewish Cabala and the beliefs and ideas of the Catholic Church".[77] After the break with Carl von Hessen the Judenloge succeeded in obtaining authorization from the English Grand Master, the Duke of Sussex, to operate under the auspices of the Grand Lodge of London. Henceforth its position was secure, but it remained isolated and ostracized by the mainstream of German Masonry.

Meanwhile Hirschfeld had tried to introduce the rites of the Asiatic Brethren into the Frankfurt lodge, but the lodge would have none of it. When an anonymous pamphlet, *Das Judenthum in der Maurerey*, was published in 1816 attacking the lodge in venomous terms and pointing to its links with Hirschfeld, the members published a rebuttal of the pamphlet's allegations, stating that the lodge had never pursued alchemical speculations and denying that anyone called Hirschsfeld had ever been a member.[78]

With regard to the lodge's attitude to the higher degrees, Katz writes: "It is almost obvious that, in choosing between limiting their degrees to the first three and instituting the higher ones, or between humanistic aspirations and mystic or quasi-mystic doctrines, the lodge decided in favor of the former in each instance." This assertion, however, is contradicted in a most surprising way by a communication from the lodge to the Grand Orient in Paris during the Napoleonic phase, which is now preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale. The communication, which was in reply to an enquiry concerning the position of Jewish masons in Germany, states, among other things:

> Jews are eager to possess the degree of Rose-Croix, and there are many who do possess it and who have received it from French chapters and even from the Grand Orient of France. ...
>
> The Jewish Rose-Croix members take part in all the workings and observe all the ceremonies of this degree. ...
>
> They receive the French Rose-Croix degree because in Germany there are no chapters.

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[77] *Ibid.*, p. 66.
[78] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

> The ostensible reason that German masons give for rejecting Jews is that the latter cannot swear on the Gospel, but in fact the real motive is commercial jealousy.

The four signatories of the letter include the Jewish founder Geisenheimer and F.J. Molitor, both of whom sign themselves "S P R" (Souverain Prince Rose-Croix).[79]

These French Rose-Croix grades were different in character from the Gold- und Rosenkreuz degrees, but were no less Christian and mystical in emphasis. The fact that Geisenheimer and other Jewish masons took part in them, in apparent contradiction to the humanistic leanings of the Frankfurt lodge, demonstrates once again how difficult it is to draw a dividing line between Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment strains in masonry.

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[79] Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Fonds Maconnique, "Note du Comité Secret des Relations Extérieures de la Loge Aurore Naissante de Francfort-sur-le-Mein adressée au Frère Furtier du Grand Orient de France." I am grateful to Jean-Pascal Ruggiu for providing me with a typed copy of this document, which is evidently undated.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSION

As has been stated at the outset, it has not been my intention in this thesis to make a definitive pronouncement on the exact relationship between the Rosicrucian revival on the one hand and the *Aufklärung* and counter-*Aufklärung* on the other. Rather, my aim has been to improve on the over-simplistic view of the neo-Rosicrucians as being simply a part of the anti-*Aufklärung* camp.

I have argued that it is possible to distinguish three main currents in the religious-intellectual-philosophical life of 18th-century Germany: (1) the established churches, Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed; (2) the complex of ideas grouped together under the broad heading of *Aufklärung*; (3) a mystical and esoteric current including hermetic, alchemical, pietistic and Rosicrucian tendencies. As I have attempted to show, the third tendency was often as much in conflict with the first as with the second, but was also capable of allying itself with either. These currents flowed simultaneously at different levels and behaved differently depending on which level was involved. The philosophical level, for example, often produced a different interaction from the political one.

Taking the philosophical level first, it is certainly possible to argue that the Rosicrucian revival was rooted in a world-view that was at odds with what is broadly accepted as the basic Enlightenment world-view as outlined in Chapter 1. As we have seen, the neo-Rosicrucians took a pessimistic view of the world and of human beings, characterized by a gnostic type of dualism, emphasizing the doctrine of the Fall and believing that humanity was in a benighted state from which it could be redeemed only with the help of an ancient esoteric gnosis, guarded by an initiated elite and hedged about with secrecy—a gnosis which featured alchemy, Kabbalah and a mystical type of Christianity—all of which conflicted with what is generally regarded as the essential Enlightenment outlook.

This must, however, be qualified in the German context. As has been pointed out, there was a strain in the German *Aufklärung* that never fully went along with the universalist direction of the French Enlightenment but retained a respect for German local traditions and customs. People of this persuasion could be attracted by the alchemical-hermetic-Rosicrucian gnosis as part of the German heritage and still be considered *aufgeklärt*. In any case, to hold a philosophy that conflicts with the *Aufklärung* is not quite the same as being actively part of the Counter-*Aufklärung*. As I have shown, it was only at a

certain stage that the Rosicrucian philosophy turned into an active anti-*Aufklärung* polemic, and even then there were Rosicrucians who took a different view, since the same philosophy can be applied in different ways by different people.

The question becomes even more complicated when we look at the level of day-to-day religious practice and policy. One of the main accusations against the Gold- und Rosenkreuz in terms of religious bigotry rests on the policies of Wöllner and his colleagues under Frederick William II of Prussia. Certainly Wöllner saw himself as carrying out a crusade against the *Aufklärung* in the religious sphere, and his policy of enforcing orthodoxy ran counter to the *Aufklärung* spirit. At the same time, it must be remembered that his *Religionsedikt* did in fact set a high standard in terms of sectarian and inter-faith toleration and that the measures taken by him to combat impiety were intended merely to protect the purity of the Reformed and Lutheran churches. Furthermore, judging by other aspects of his policy, especially early in his career, Wöllner was in many ways a product of the *Aufklärung*. He can be seen as someone who essentially belonged to our third category of tendencies but at various times was influenced by the other two.

The issue of toleration towards the Jews makes the matter more complicated still. The chapter on the Asiatic Brethren showed how this organization, which was part of the Rosicrucian current while disavowing any links with the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, was unique in the masonic world in its openness to Jews. Jews of a rationalist turn of mind might decry the kabbalistic leanings that lay at the root of this openness, while others might with some justification say that the openness was only skin-deep, but the fact remains that—looking at the purely practical consequences—the Asiatic Brethren were, for a time, among the very few forums in Germany where Jews and Christians could meet on anything like an equal basis. Furthermore, many Jews of the *Haskalah* or Jewish Enlightenment were members of the Asiatics.

Other evidence for the anti-*Aufklärung* nature of the Rosicrucian revival is the connection between Rosicrucianism and superstitious practices, such as the clairvoyant sessions at Breslau and the exorcisms of Gaßner. Here it must be admitted that the neo-Rosicrucian world view tended to favour such practices, whereas the *Aufklärung* world view tended to exclude them.

Politically, the case for the neo-Rosicrucians being anti-*Aufklärung* rests mainly on the censorship policies of Wöllner and his colleagues, as well as on the campaign against the Illuminati. It should be remembered, however, that these developments came relatively late in the history of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. Furthermore, although the world-view of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz was profoundly hostile to that of the Illuminati, certain members of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz were deeply shocked by the proceedings against the Illuminati. Furthermore, if the Rosicrucian revival had been straightforwardly anti-

Aufklärung, one would not have expected it to be attacked by a conservative figure such as Leopold Alois Hoffmann, who, as we saw, bitterly attacked the Gold- und Rosenkreuz as a revolutionary organization in disguise.

Political categories become even more difficult to apply when we consider the Rosicrucian revival in Poland and Russia. King Stanislas Poniatowski of Poland was, as we have seen, a Rosicrucian, but was also hailed as a man of the Enlightenment. In Russia we have the example of Novikov, who is usually seen as a great Enlightenment figure but who was also a leading member of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz—a combination that we encountered in a number of other figures. At the same time we saw how the neo-Rosicrucian world-view arguably contributed to the formation of the Holy Alliance. Here again we have an example of how the Rosicrucian-theosophical current could pull in different directions.

It is equally difficult to judge the Rosicrucian revival as anti-*Aufklärung* from its social make-up. We have seen (Chapter 4) how the Kassel Rosicrucian circle and various masonic lodges of Rosicrucian inclination varied widely in their membership profiles, within the general category of *Gebildeten*. This does not prima facie support the view that the Gold- und Rosenkreuz was tied to the interests of any particular social faction, but membership statistics are of little use without a much greater volume of information about the members than it has been possible to amass and without a detailed study of local conditions and other factors that might have affected the nature of the membership.

When the Romantic movement came as a reaction to the Enlightenment, there was a renewed interest in the world-view that the Gold- und Rosenkreuz represented. Alchemy, Kabbalah, numerology and other such traditions have, for example, been traced in the works of Novalis (1772-1801).[1] Arguably elements of the same world-view can also be found in the mystical ideas of the Romantic philosopher Schelling (1775-1854). It is, of course, difficult to disentangle specifically Rosicrucian influences on Romanticism from the general revivial of interest in theosophical currents of thought. It is probably fair to say, however, that the Rosicrucian revival was one of the forces that helped to prepare the ground for the Romantic movement.

Another important dimension to be considered is the image of the Rosicrucians. We have seen how, in the hands of writers of the radical *Aufklärung*, the Rosicrucians became the epitome of obscurantism, superstition and reaction, while the conservative Hoffmann, by contrast, portrayed them as agents of radicalism and subversion. Sometimes these two opposing views have even been combined, as they were in Eduard Breier's novel, *Die Rosenkreuzer in*

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[1] Hans Graβl, *Aufbruch zur Romantik* (Munich, C.H. Beck, 1968), p. 300.

Wien (1852), describing a Viennese Rosicrucian lodge in the time of Joseph II, which is dedicated to various subversive activities. One of the real historical characters who appears as a member of this lodge is the radical bookseller and publisher Georg Philipp Wucherer,[2] who is described as printing pamphlets on such themes as the necessity for brothels in Vienna. Other characters involved with the lodge include Cagliostro and a baron from Berlin who arrives in Vienna with a box full of alchemical equipment. Thus the Rosicrucians in this novel are portrayed as a sort of mixture of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz and the Illuminati by someone who clearly abhorred both tendencies.

Seventy-two years later, in Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* (1924), the Rosicrucians appear again, in a way that once again links them with the Counter-Enlightenment. The novel features two characters in whom Mann has embodied the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment perspectives in their widest sense. The Italian freemason Settembrini stands for democracy, secularism and progress; while the Jew-turned-Jesuit, Naphta, represents Christian tradition in its most extreme and authoritarian form. In a discussion about Freemasonry, Naphta holds forth on the subject of the higher degrees:

> It was the the period [i.e. the 18th century] when the Fathers of our faith sought to animate the society [Freemasonry] by breathing into it Catholic-hierarchical ideas. ... And it was the time when Rosicrucianism made its entrance into the lodges, that remarkable brotherhood, which, you will note, was a peculiar union of purely rational ideas of political and social improvement and a millennial programme, with elements distinctly oriental, Indian and Arabic philosophy and magical nature-lore.

He goes on to explain:

> This it was which lent Freemasonry a new brilliance and charm, and explains the great number of recruits to it at that period of its history. It drew to itself all the elements which were weary of the rationalistic twaddle of the century, and thirsting for a stronger draught of life.[3]

In these passages Mann eloquently perpetuates the view of high-degree Masonry and neo-Rosicrucianism as standing firmly in the anti-Enlightenment camp, a view which is still widely held by historians. We have examined how this view arose and how it has become part of the enduring mythology of Rosicrucianism. This study has, I hope, begun to disentangle the mythology

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2 See Ernst Wangermann, *From Joseph II to the Jacobin Trials* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 41-5. Wucherer was in league with Karl Friedrich Bahrdt, founder of the Deutsche Union and one of the more radical of the German *Aufklärer*.

3 *Op. cit.*, translated by H.T. Lowe-Porter (Penguin/Secker & Warburg, 1960, reprinted 1976), pp. 509-10.

from the historical reality, while at the same time recognizing that such a task is endless, as new layers continue to be added to the myth.

A NOTE ON SOURCES

Before the Second World War it would have been considerably easier than it is now to research a thesis on this subject. At that time there existed many archives in Germany, including those of various masonic lodges, containing documentary material on the Gold- und Rosenkreuz and related subjects. The Nazi era, however, with its anti-masonic policies, saw the closure of the lodges and the confiscation of their archives. Documents relating to Freemasonry were also seized from non-masonic archives such as the Geheimes Hausarchiv, Munich. Much of this material was deposited in a special museum of Freemasonry in Berlin, established by Section VII of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt. During the war many of these documents were destroyed or lost, while others ended up in eastern Europe, and a few were saved.

One collection which survived was that amassed by the German masonic historian Dr. Georg Kloβ (1787-1854), which was left to the Grand Lodge of the Netherlands. Although confiscated by the Nazis during the occupation, it was recovered after the war and is now back in its original home in the Hague. This rich collection of books and manuscripts was an invaluable source for the present study.

Other collections of relevant manuscripts also survived the war. One of these is housed in the Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Marburg, and contains many documents relating to the Kassel Rosicrucian circle of which Georg Forster was a member. Another important masonic collection, including Gold- und Rosenkreuz material, ended up in the Merseburg branch of the Zentrales Staatsarchiv of the German Democratic Republic. Both of these collections were major sources for the East German scholar Gerhard Steiner in his book *Freimaurer und Rosenkreuzer: Georg Forsters Weg durch die Geheimbünde*. Not having examined either of these archives, I have relied, for my account of the Kassel circle, on quotations from Steiner's book, which is a solidly documented work, notwithstanding its Marxist perspective.

Another important surviving collection is the *Nachlaβ* of Duke Friedrich August of Braunschweig, now housed in the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel. This collection, which I have not been able to consult directly, was used by Johannes Schultze for his article "Die Rosenkreuzer und Friedrich Wilhelm II" in *Forschungen zur brandenburgischen Geschichte* (1964), from which I have quoted in Chapters 3 and 7. At the time of writing the Canadian historian, Dr. Christina Rathgeber, is working on this collection.

A number of important collections of manuscript material in this field also survive in the eastern block countries, and here again I have had to rely on

secondary sources. One of the richest of these collections is the one formerly belonging to the Festetics family, which was kept at their castle of Degh in Hungary. This important collection of masonic, Rosicrucian, theosophical, alchemical and hermetic documents was used by Abafi for his *Geschichte der Freimaurerei in Oesterreich-Ungarn* and for his article on the origins of the neo-Rosicrucians (see Chapter 3). Eva Huber has also used the Degh material for her article on the social structure of the Viennese lodges (see Chapter 4). An edition of collected material from this archive is currently being prepared by Prof. Eva Balázs of Budapest.

As regards Czechoslovakia, Dr. Jiri Kroupa of Brno has informed me that the library of the prominent Rosicrucian, Prince Karl of Salm-Reifferscheidt, is still kept in the former family castle of Rajec near Brno. I have quoted Dr. Kroupa's researches in discussing the Gold- und Rosenkreuz in Moravia in Chapter 4.

Apart from these major collections, there are smaller groups of documents, such as the Gumer *Nachlaß* in the Tiroler Landesarchiv, Innsbruck, of which I made direct use in Chapter 10. Individual Rosicrucian manuscripts have also survived here and there in archives and libraries (see manuscripts, in bibliography).

I have endeavoured to make the main burden of this thesis rest on the following: (1) printed primary sources, such as those used in discussing the philosophy of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz; (2) direct study of manuscripts; (3) secondary works drawing on well-substantiated archival sources as well as printed material.

As the third category is a large and important one, it would be useful to say something more about some of the works in this group. I have already mentioned some of the scholars whose work I have used (e.g. Abafi, Steiner, Kroupa) and the archives upon which they drew. Another work that has been frequently relied upon in this study is Bernhard Beyer's *Das Lehrsystem der Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* (1925). This compilation of Gold- und Rosenkreuz rituals and teachings relies both on primary printed sources and on certain manuscripts which at the time were in the Freimaurer-Museum at Bayreuth but were lost in the Nazi era. Beyer carefully documents his sources, and is accurate in his use of printed sources wherever I have been able to check them. Arnold Marx's *Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* (1929), which does not make direct use of primary sources, was originally successfully presented as a doctoral thesis at the Friedrich Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin and is thoroughly documented. In Chapter 7 I have relied heavily on Schwarz's *Der erste Kulturkampf in Preußen* (1925), which, as I mentioned in note 26 to Chapter 7, was drawn to a large extent from a now largely dispersed archive in Berlin. Although it is now difficult to corroborate his material he is considered reliable by the scholars whom I have consulted, and is treated as such by Klaus Epstein

in his *The Genesis of German Conservatism* (1966). I have also relied on work by recent or contemporary scholars of repute, such as Jacob Katz's account of the Asiatic Brethren in *Jews and Freemasons in Europe* (1970) which I used in Chapter 10 to complement my own research in primary sources. Where I have used authors whose sources are less solidly documented, as in the case of Santing's *De Historische Rozenkruizers* (1930-32, reprinted 1977) or Hermann Kopp's *Die Alchemie* (1886), I have attempted to employ suitably cautious language or to use their work to complement evidence from other sources.

Throughout my research I have been careful to take advice on sources from reputable scholars in this area, such as Antoine Faivre, Ludwig Hammermayer and Edith Rosenstrauch-Königsberg. I hope, therefore, that every reasonable precaution has been taken to avoid pitfalls.

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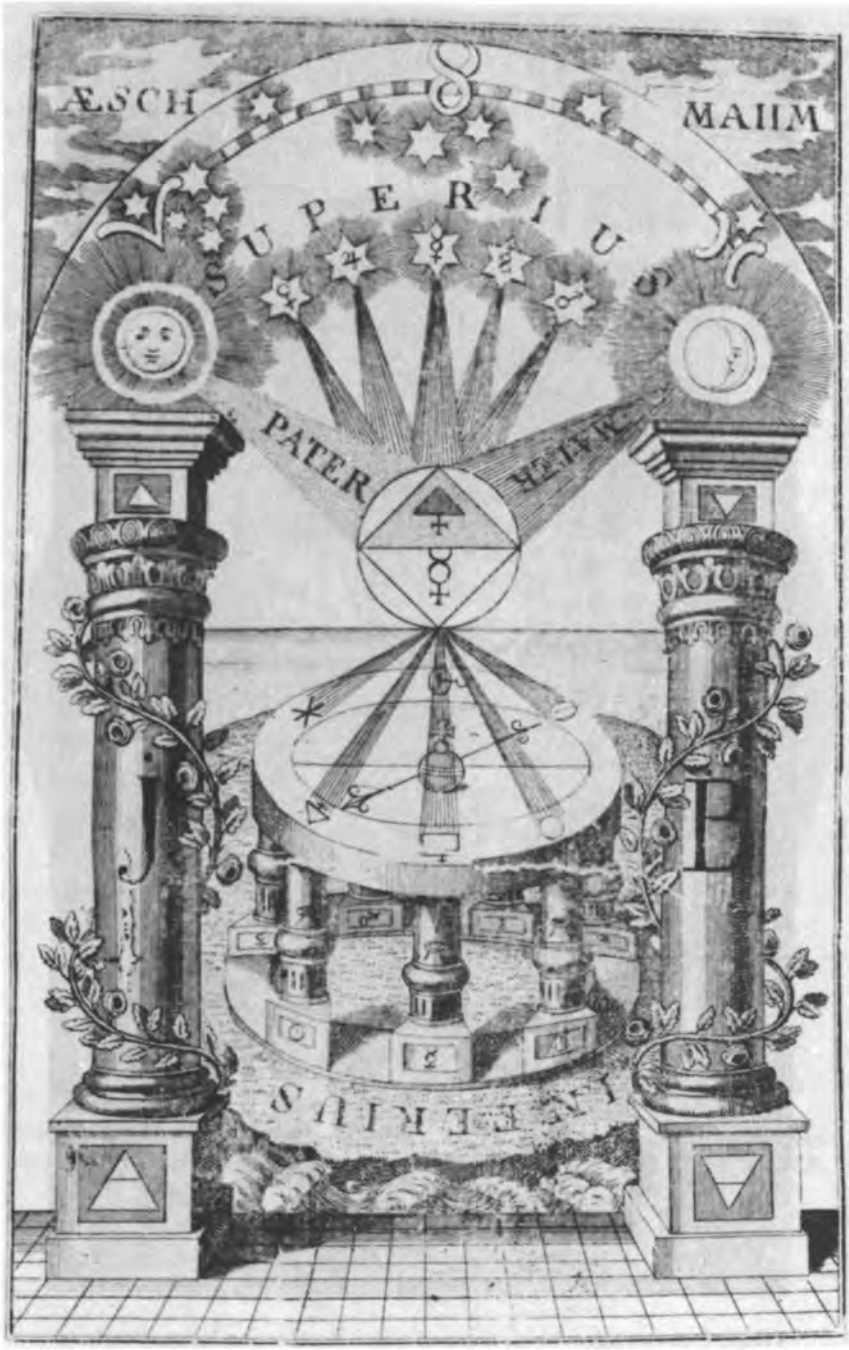

Figure 1. Formation of the world out of the primal elements of fire (*aysh*) and water (*mayim*) (from Georg von Welling's *Opus Mago-Cabbalisticum et Theosophicum*, first published in 1719).

Figure 2. A candidate being received into a Rosicrucian lodge, clearly recognizable as such from the alchemical equipment on the shelves (from *Taschenbuch für Freimaurer auf das Jahr 1800*).

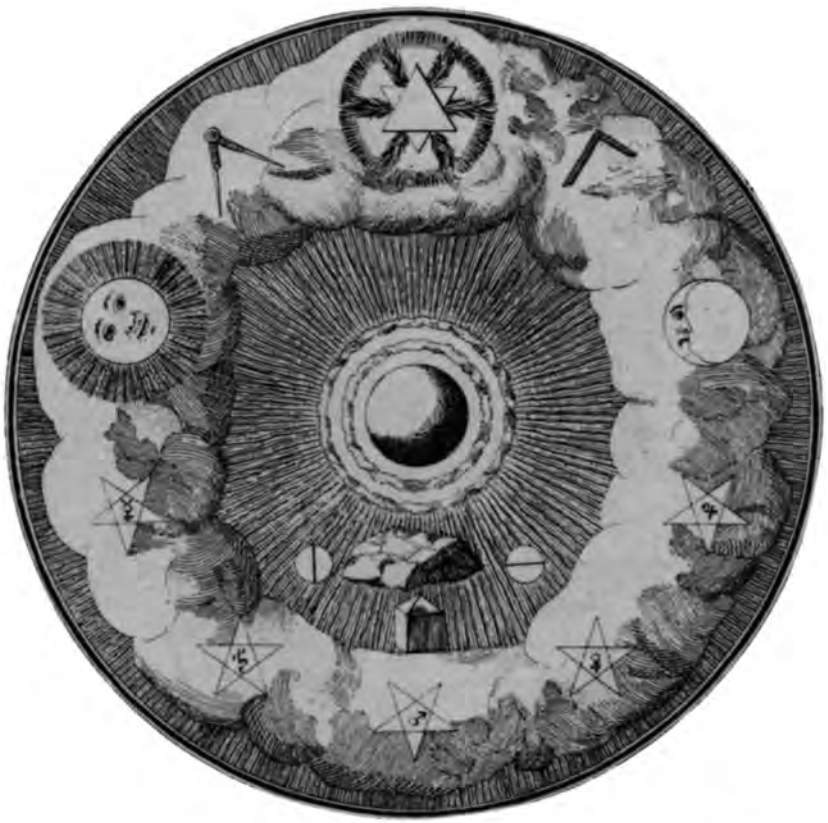

Figure 3. Ceremonial carpet used in the second grade of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz order (from *Die theoretischen Brüder oder zweite Stuffe der Rosenkreutzer*, 1785).

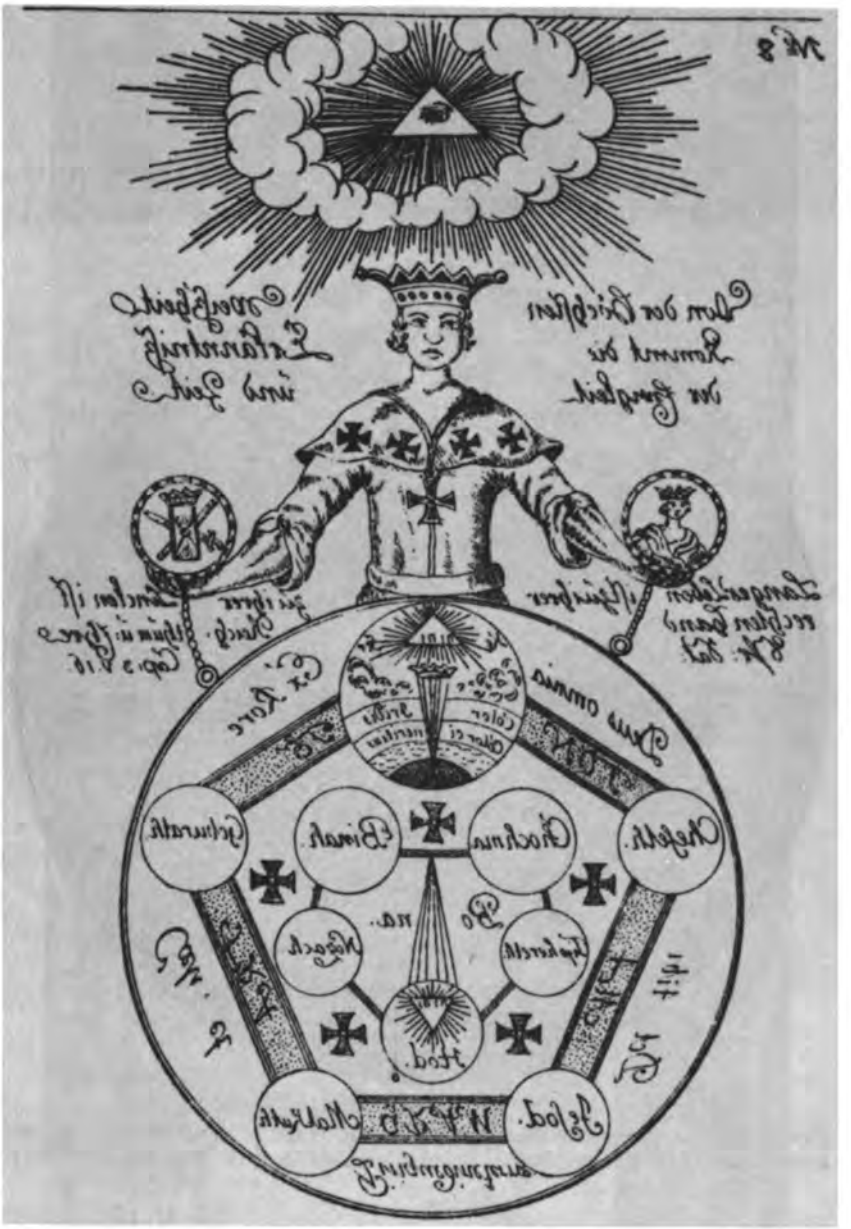

Figure 4. Symbolic tableau for the fifth grade, that of Minores, in the Gold- und Rosenkreuz system (reproduced in Bernhard Beyer, *Das Lehrsystem der Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, 1925).

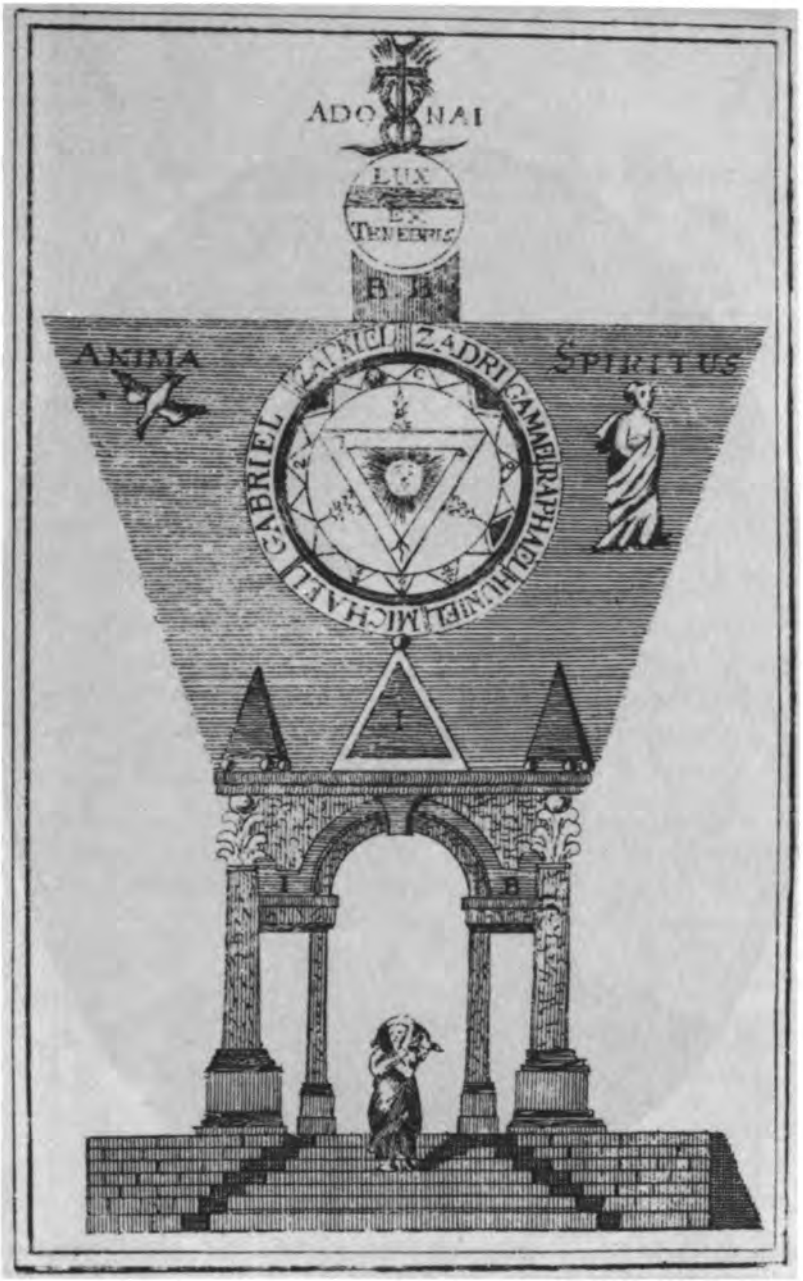

Figure 5. Tableau for the fifth grade of the Bon Pasteur, a Polish system with Rosicrucian elements (see M. Thalmann, "Das System der Loge 'du Bon Pasteur'" in *Das Freimaurer-Museum*, Vol. 2, 1926).

Figure 6. Nikolai Novikov, influential writer, publisher and philanthropist and a leading member of the Russian branch of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz (frontispiece to C.E. Usovoi, *N.I. Novikov: His Life and Public Activities*, 1892).

Figure 7. Alchemist in his laboratory, from *Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer* (Altona, 1785).

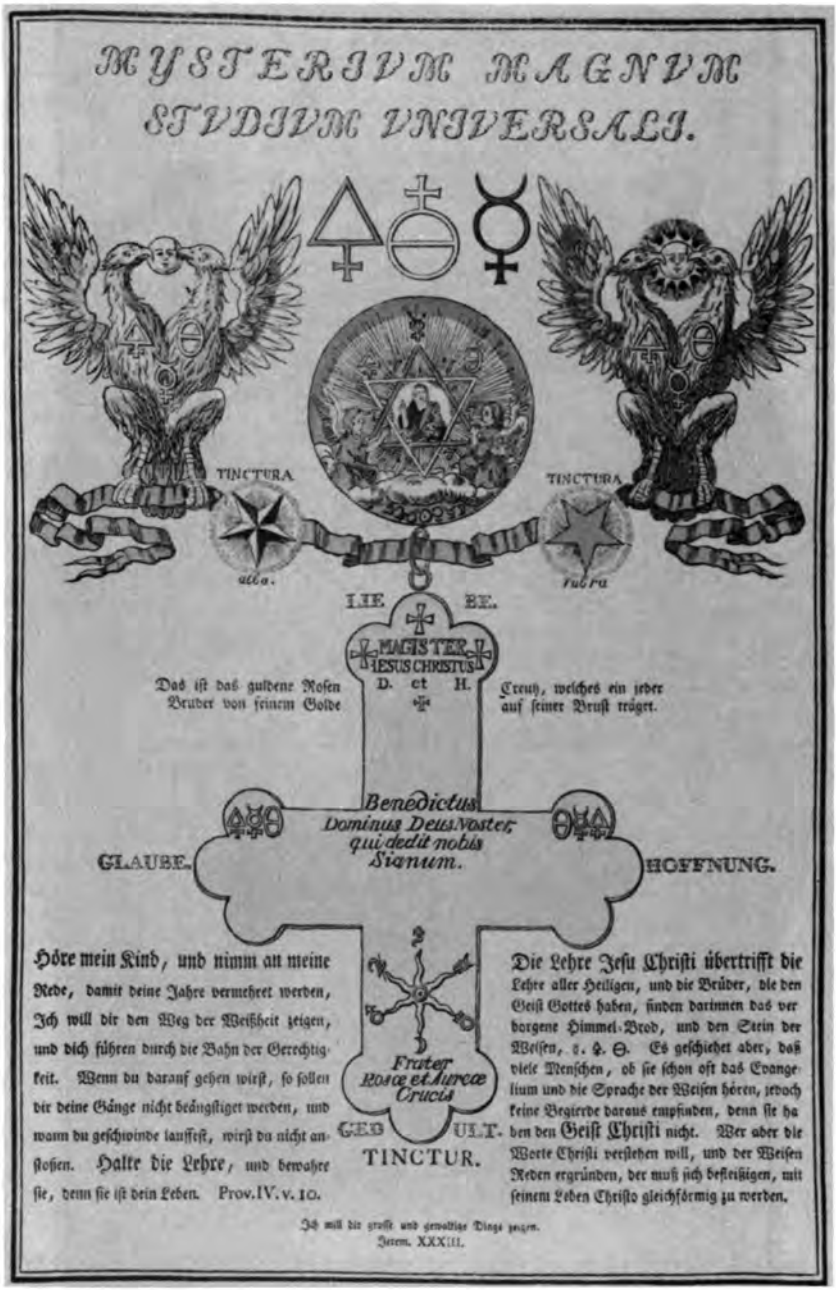
MYSTERIVM MAGNVM
STVDIVM VNIVERSALI.
TINCTURA
alba.
TINCTURA
rubra
I.H.S.
MAGISTER
JESUS CHRISTUS
D. et H.
Das ist das guldene Rosen Bruder von seinem Golde
Creuz, welches ein jeder auf seiner Brust trägt.
Benedictus Dominus Deus Noster, qui dedit nobis Signum.
GLAUBE.
HOFFNUNG.
Höre mein Kind, und nimm an meine Rede, damit deine Jahre vermehret werden, Ich will dir den Weg der Weißheit zeigen, und dich führen durch die Bahn der Gerechtigkeit. Wenn du darauf gehen wirst, so sollen dir deine Gänge nicht beängstiget werden, und wann du geschwinde laufffest, wirst du nicht anstoßen. Halte die Lehre, und bewahre sie, denn sie ist dein Leben. Prov. IV. v. 10.
Frater Rosæ et Aureæ Crucis
CRU
CIFI
TINCTUR.
Die Lehre Jesu Christi übertrifft die Lehre aller Heiligen, und die Brüder, die den Geist Gottes haben, finden darinnen das verborgene Himmel-Brod, und den Stein der Weisen, s. q. Es geschiehet aber, daß viele Menschen, ob sie schon oft das Evangelium und die Sprache der Weisen hören, jedoch keine Begierde daraus empfinden, denn sie haben den Geist Christi nicht. Wer aber die Worte Christi verstehen will, und der Weisen Reden ergründen, der muß sich befleißigen, mit seinem Leben Christo gleichförmig zu werden.
Ich will dir groß und gewaltige Dinge zeigen.
Jerem. XXXIII.

Figure 8. Rosicrucian pendant with alchemical symbols, from *Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer*.

SPIRITUALITY / HISTORY

This new edition of Christopher McIntosh's classic book on the Golden and Rosy Cross order is eagerly awaited. The order stands out as one of the most fascinating and influential of the high-degree Masonic and Illuminist groups that mushroomed in Europe from the eighteenth century onward. Active mainly in the German-speaking lands, it recast the original Rosicrucian vision and gave it renewed vitality. At one point it became politically influential when the Prussian King, Frederick William II, was a member of the order. Historians have often perceived the Golden and Rosy Cross as having had a conservative, anti-Enlightenment agenda, but this study—drawing on rare German sources—shows that the matter was more complex. The members of the order practiced alchemy and operated a degree system that was imitated by later orders, such as the Golden Dawn. Like the latter, the Golden and Rosy Cross exerted a wide and enduring cultural influence. Both the alchemy of the order and its powerful ritual system are insightfully described in Christopher McIntosh's clear and compelling style.

Christopher McIntosh is a faculty member at the Centre for the Study of Esotericism, University of Exeter, England. He is the author of *Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival*, also published by SUNY Press.

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